Martin H. Brice

THE TRIBALS

GEORGE HELM

The Tribals

MARTIN H. BRICE

Practically everyone knows of HMS *Cossack*'s magnificent exploit in a Norwegian fiord in February 1940 when her crew rescued 299 captive British merchant seamen from the *Altmark*. *Cossack* was just one of 27 Tribal Class destroyers which served in the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian and Royal Canadian Navies from 1938 to 1969. They were considered by many to be the finest of their type.

The Tribals probably saw more action over a longer period of time, and over a greater area of the globe, than any other class of destroyer. They took part in almost every Home Fleet and Mediterranean action, the D-Day operations, the East Indies, the South-West Pacific amphibious landings, the Battle for Leyte Gulf, the surrender of Japan and the Korean War. Technical details are provided, together with lists of commanding officers and pennant numbers, and the ship's crests. There are also more than 100 photographs and the book contains a foreword by Admiral Sir Deric Holland-Martin, GCB, DSO, DSC, who commanded both *Tartar* and *Nubian*.

The author is at present Deputy Keeper of the Department of Education and Publications at the Imperial War Museum. It was while working there on the preservation of historic ships that he met Captain Bruce, who has preserved the RCN Tribal *Haida* in Toronto. This comprehensive, exciting account of the Tribals is the result of that meeting.

Jacket painting of HMS Matabele *by George Heiron*

The Tribals

Martin H. Brice

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Biography of a Destroyer Class

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Contents

Foreword	page 7
Introduction	9
Acknowledgements	13
Abbreviations	14
Description	15
HMS Afridi	19
HMAS Arunta	29
HMS Ashanti	40
HMCS Athabaskan	66
HMCS Athabaskan	71
HMAS Bataan	86
HMS Bedouin	89
HMCS Cayuga	99
HMS Cossack	105
HMS Eskimo	116
HMS Gurkha	127
HMCS Haida	130
HMCS Huron	140
HMCS Iroquois	149
HMS Maori	157
HMS Mashona	163
HMS Matabele	168
HMCS Micmac	171
HMS Mohawk	178
HMCS Nootka	191
HMS Nubian	201
HMS Punjabi	214
HMS Sikh	218
HMS Somali	228
HMS Tartar	235
HMAS Warramunga	243
HMS Zulu	246
The Tribals	251
Index of Tribals	256

The Second World War ranks with the Age of Elizabeth I, the Seven Years' War and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, as one of Britain's most brilliant periods of maritime history. In the later conflict, modern communications enabled famous strategists to move great fleets over the whole globe, yet ultimate victory, as in earlier struggles, still depended upon the individual ships, their captains and their crews.

To them, this book is dedicated.

Foreword

by Admiral Sir Deric Holland-Martin GCB, DSO, DSC

MR BRICE HAS ASKED ME to write this foreword, partly because we know each other at the Imperial War Museum where he is on the staff and I am a trustee, and partly because I was lucky enough to serve in two of the Tribals. As the original First Lieutenant of the *Tartar* I dissuaded the Admiralty from imposing as our ship's badge a drop of tar on either side of a foul anchor. Instead I suggested a baby saying goodbye and we compromised with the more dignified Tartar Chieftain's head which I found in the British Museum. The *Tartar* gave me my first taste of command and whetted my appetite for more, when for a few months my Captain went sick in the early days of the war. The *Nubian* I commanded for over two years, mostly in the Mediterranean. Both ships were lucky and survived the war. In fact the *Nubian*, as this book records, was the only one of the first eight Tribals to remain afloat after the autumn of 1942.

A Sea Lord, when the design of the Tribals came before the Board, criticised the straight stem and pencilled on the drawing the slight curve that he thought would improve it. This was accepted as he had drawn it. Thus "from the proud nostril curve of a prow's line" right aft to the stern the Tribals looked the part – powerful, beautiful and effective – and so they proved, as the Australians and Canadians recognised when they built some splendid Tribals of their own.

This book is called the *Biography of a Destroyer Class*. The dictionary defines a biography as the "life course of a living being". To a landlubber the title may seem inappropriate for a book about ships. But a sailor, especially if he served in one of the Tribals, and still more if he was privileged to command her, will realise how apt is the word "biography". Although the Tribals were ships of a class and outwardly looked alike, each developed, as in any family, a personality of her own. They lived dangerously in a war that took a heavy toll of overworked destroyers and their crews, but, serious as were the casualties, the enemy suffered even greater loss at the hands of the Tribals.

Mr Brice avoids heroics and writes factually. However, for those of us who served in the Tribals this book will herd the memories: the wet rough and tumble of the Atlantic gales: the freezing agony of Arctic convoys in winter and the more perilous summer days when the sun never set: the clear Mediterranean nights and glassy seas shattered by man-made war: the creaking, rattling roll in the Indian Ocean monsoon: the sweltering discomfort of the Pacific tropics: the weary monotony and sudden

emergency: the thrill of high speed and night action: the long days of intermittent air attack: the companionship of a confident crew in a happy ship: the loss of life, limbs and ships silhouetted against vain hopes and realised fears: courage and conquered cowardice: the taut tempers eased by the sailor's sense of humour and fun: the return to "the haven where they would be" to boiler clean or better still give leave: these and much more.

There was comedy and tragedy, triumph and disaster, boredom and crisis, good times and bad. But this biography of the great family of Tribals justifies the pride and confidence so many officers and men felt for these illustrious ships – our ships.

Introduction

In 1934 the Admiralty considered the possible threat posed by the 20 special-type destroyers of the Japanese *Fubuki*-class, which mounted six 5in guns and nine torpedo tubes on a displacement of 1,680 tons. Regarded by some authorities as the most powerful destroyers in the world, they were rivalled by the Italian Navigatori-class of scouts, each displacing 1,943 tons and carrying six 4.7in guns and up to six torpedo tubes. The French Navy had 24 super destroyers in service and a further six nearing completion. The smallest of these displaced over 2,100 tons and mounted 5.1in guns and six torpedo tubes. Germany did not yet have such big destroyers, but there were indications that the new class then being laid down would displace more than 2,000 tons and have a powerful gun and torpedo armament.

On the other hand, the majority of recent British destroyers in service, under construction or about to be ordered (the A- to I-classes) only mounted four 4.7in guns and eight torpedo tubes. Their displacement was something over 1,300 tons. The V & W – and earlier classes – were even smaller, weaker, and were of course much older.

The Admiralty therefore decided that the next class of destroyer must be larger, thus providing a steadier platform for the extra guns that were needed to defend the fleet against torpedo attack by these big foreign ships. Their main armament was to be so designed that it could also be used to augment the anti-aircraft defences of the fleet. Torpedo armament was considered less important, while their anti-submarine capability was not given a very high priority. Admittedly this feature of their armament was superior to earlier classes, but perhaps it was felt that the confident use of asdic would guarantee the defeat of any underwater menace. The new class would not be expected to carry out either high speed minesweeping or minelaying.

The new ships must not be so big that they sacrificed speed or manoeuvrability, nor must they themselves become a liability, requiring lesser vessels to screen them from attack. In any case there was a treaty limit of 1,850 tons on destroyers and although it might be contravened slightly, it would not be politic for the terms of the treaty to be flouted too obviously or deceitfully. There was also the question of cost. Their contract price was already estimated at £340,000 each (about £80,000 more than the I-class) and their size must be kept within this limit.

To a certain extent also, financial considerations dictated that they should be built with transverse framing, and the suggestion that they be constructed with longitudinal framing was rejected. This class were the last British destroyers to be transversed framed, i.e. their transverse frames and deck beams (running across the ship) were relatively shallow and closely spaced, while the longitudinals and deck girders

(running along the ship) were relatively deep and widely spaced. In longitudinally-framed ships, it is the other way round. Longitudinally-framed ships are more difficult and expensive to build, but are reputedly stronger. Both systems have their merits, their disadvantages and their advocates. Considering the punishment which the Tribals withstood, they could not be described as weak.

The design team had to consider all the usual problems of stability, always bearing in mind the fact that the main machinery design had so improved that the required horse-power could be obtained with much less weight than in earlier classes. And, of course, extra gun-armament would also mean extra topweight.

No fewer than eight designs were prepared before one could be found to satisfy all requirements, and even then modifications continued to be suggested. The main armament was to be eight 4.7in guns in four Mk XIX LA/HA 40° twin mountings, one of which was tried out in 'B' position in *Hereward* from December 1936 to June 1937. The close range armament would consist of four 2pdr pompoms in one quadruple Mk. VII mounting plus eight 0.5in machine guns in two quadruple mountings. The new class would carry one power-worked set of quadruple torpedo tubes, housing four Mk IX torpedoes. There would also be two depth-charge throwers and one depth-charge chute. As designed, each ship's magazine housed 2,400 4.7in 50lb shells (1,600 LA, 400 HA and 400 star), 14,400 rounds of 2pdr ammunition and 10,000 rounds of 0.5in machine-gun ammunition. Up to 30 depth-charges could be carried. Apart from the normal radio-communication equipment of the day, the ships would also carry a medium-frequency direction-finding set so that a pair of ships could fix an enemy transmission.

The ships were to have an overall length of 377 feet, a beam of 36½ feet and a draught of 9 feet, with a standard displacement of 1,854 tons. The three Admiralty 3-drum boilers would produce steam at 300lb/sq.in, and the Parsons impulse reaction single induction turbines would deliver 44,000 shaft horse power to give the ship a maximum speed of 36 knots. 524 tons of fuel oil would give an endurance of 5,700 nautical miles at 20 knots. It would be very much less if a higher speed was maintained for any length of time. The ship's company (enjoying improved accommodation and facilities) was to total 190, with 219 in the ships employed as flotilla or divisional leaders. Two 25ft motor boats, one 27ft whaler, one 16ft dinghy and seven or more carley floats were to be carried.

In preparing the final design, Mr A. P. Cole had in mind the desirability of having a good-looking ship in the hope that the officers and men would be proud of her appearance. Such a feature is beyond statistical evaluation.

Apparently neither destroyers nor cruisers, they were first called V-leaders and then officially designated Tribal destroyers, being named after the famous Tribal- or F-class of 1907. These vessels had themselves been milestones in destroyer development – the first class to have turbines and to burn fuel oil. The smallest displaced 850 tons and the number of funnels varied from three to six. They served in the Dover Patrol for the whole of the First World War, dealing with U-boats, engaging enemy destroyers, bombarding the German Army and acting as despatch-vessels. Two and one-half

Tribals were lost. *Maori* and *Ghurka* were mined in 1915 and 1917, *Zulu*'s stern was wrecked by a mine, while *Nubian*'s bow was destroyed by a torpedo. Their remaining halves were joined together as *HMS Zubian*. *Afridi*, *Amazon*, *Cossack*, *Crusader*, *Mohawk*, *Saracen*, *Tartar*, *Viking*, and *Zubian* all survived the First World War and were afterwards scrapped.

The 1935 Estimates provided for seven Tribal destroyers, a further nine being provided for in the 1936 Estimates. On 10th March 1936 (three days after German troops marched into the Rhineland) orders for the first seven Tribals were sent out to shipbuilders and in June 1936 the second batch was ordered. On 9th June 1936 the keels of the first two Tribals, *Afridi* and *Cossack*, were laid down at Vickers-Armstrong's High Walker Yard on the Tyne.

The original sixteen ships were organised into the 1st Tribal Destroyer Flotilla (*Afridi*, *Gurkha*, *Mohawk*, *Sikh*, *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Zulu* and *Nubian*) and the 2nd Tribal Destroyer Flotilla (*Somali*, *Ashanti*, *Mashona*, *Eskimo*, *Tartar*, *Matabele*, *Bedouin* and *Punjabi*). They were intended to serve in the Mediterranean and Home Fleets respectively.

By May 1939, experience had shown that, although large, the Tribals were nevertheless destroyers, not a special type. The 1st Tribal Destroyer Flotilla was therefore renamed the 4th Destroyer Flotilla, the 2nd Tribal Destroyer Flotilla becoming the 6th Destroyer Flotilla.

After the beginning of the Second World War, losses and damage precluded one-class destroyer flotillas, and soon most flotillas were made up of a medley of vessels. Even then they seldom operated in groups of more than three or four, although the flotilla organisation was still retained for administrative purposes.

By 1943 the original sixteen had been reduced to four (*Ashanti*, *Eskimo*, *Nubian* and *Tartar*) but they had been joined by four Tribals built by Vickers-Armstrong for the RCN – *Iroquois*, *Athabaskan* (soon to be lost herself), *Haida* and *Huron*. Canada was building four more (*Micmac*, *Nootka*, *Cayuga* and *Athabaskan II*) in her own yards, while *Arunta*, *Warramunga* and *Bataan* were built in Australia. Another four Australian Tribals were projected, but they were not proceeded with.

These later ships had improved AA armament, radar and all the new equipment that had had to be fitted as extras in the original Tribals. The later hulls were strengthened during building as pounding at high speed in rough seas had weakened the earlier hulls, which had to be stiffened during refits. Cracks and splits in the fo'c'sle decks had had to be plated over or welded together. "How wide is it this morning?" was an oft-repeated question when returning to Scapa Flow in 1940 and 1941.

Cracks in the decks, overcrowding below decks. Extra equipment demanded extra personnel to be crammed into contracting space. Hammocks touching, mess-decks two feet deep in water, violent weather, infrequent mail, irregular leave and unremitting weariness. It is not surprising that sometimes teamwork became stale, petty irritations assumed monstrous proportions and that some people, regardless of rank or branch, just simply got on each other's nerves. Some Tribals were happier

ships than their sisters, yet in the Tribals, perhaps more than in any other class "there was a bond of rivalry and comradeship between ships' companies, banter and derision for one who had failed to be present at a 'party', pride in a successful action and an overwhelming preference to lie at the oiler or alongside the jetty, alongside a sister ship, particularly one manned from the same depot." So close did some ships become, that their crews seemed completely interchangeable.

After 1945, the four RN Tribals were soon scrapped, but most of the RAN and RCN Tribals served in the Korean War and were considerably altered to perform new tasks in a changing world. By the 1960s, they too began to be scrapped although *Arunta* sank on her way to the breaker's yard. Only *Haida* survives.

Acknowledgements

The Tribals took part in so many operations that a complete bibliography must include practically every book of the Royal Navy from 1938 to 1955. Their design was so notable and subsequent alterations so related to service requirements that they also find mention in almost every technical work of the period.

But all this material, together with information obtained from official sources, only forms the skeleton of this book. Over a hundred ex-Tribesmen, their relatives and friends provided me with a wealth of personal, operational and technical details. I am indebted to them for their assistance, advice and encouragement. Any misinterpretation of their facts is mine.

Photographic acknowledgements will be found under the relevant captions, while the badges were drawn by Michael D. Moody from photographs supplied by the MOD, the RAN and the RCN.

Abbreviations

AA	Anti-aircraft
AM	Albert Medal
CD	Canadian Decoration
C-in-C	Commander-in-Chief
CO	Commanding Officer
CPO	Chief Petty Officer
CS	Cruiser Squadron
DCC	Depth Charge Chute
DCT	Director Control Tower
dct	Depth Charge Thrower
DF	Destroyer Flotilla
D/F	Direction-Finding
DSC	Distinguished Service Cross
DSEA	Davis Submarine Escape Apparatus
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
EGM	Empire Gallantry Medal
ERA	Engine Room Artificer
GC	George Cross
GM	George Medal
HF/DF	High-Frequency Direction-Finding
HMAS	His/Her Majesty's Australian Ship
HMCS	His/Her Majesty's Canadian Ship
HMNZS	His/Her Majesty's New Zealand Ship
HMS	His/Her Majesty's Ship
IWM	Imperial War Museum
LA/HA	Low-Angle/High-Angle
LCA	Landing Craft Assault
MBE	Member of the Order of the British Empire
MF/DF	Medium-Frequency Direction-Finding
MG	Machine Gun
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MV	Motor Vessel
OBE	Officer of the Order of the British Empire
PO	Petty Officer
psi	per square inch
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RCN	Royal Canadian Navy
RN	Royal Navy
RNZN	Royal New Zealand Navy
R/T	Radio-Telegraphy
SHP	Shaft Horse Power
SS	Steam Ship
TS	Transmitting Station
TT	Torpedo Tube
USN	United States Navy
USS	United States Ship
W/T	Wireless-Telegraphy
WTB	Watertight Bulkhead
WVS	Women's Voluntary Service

Description

RIGHT FORWARD over the distinctive Tribal bow, was a jackstaff and anchor light. Next on the fo'c'sle came a capstan with cables to two bower anchors. Around 'A' mounting were ready-use rounds, hand-ups and other ammunition arrangements. A carley float could be carried on each side of the bridge structure which here rose from the fo'c'sle deck.

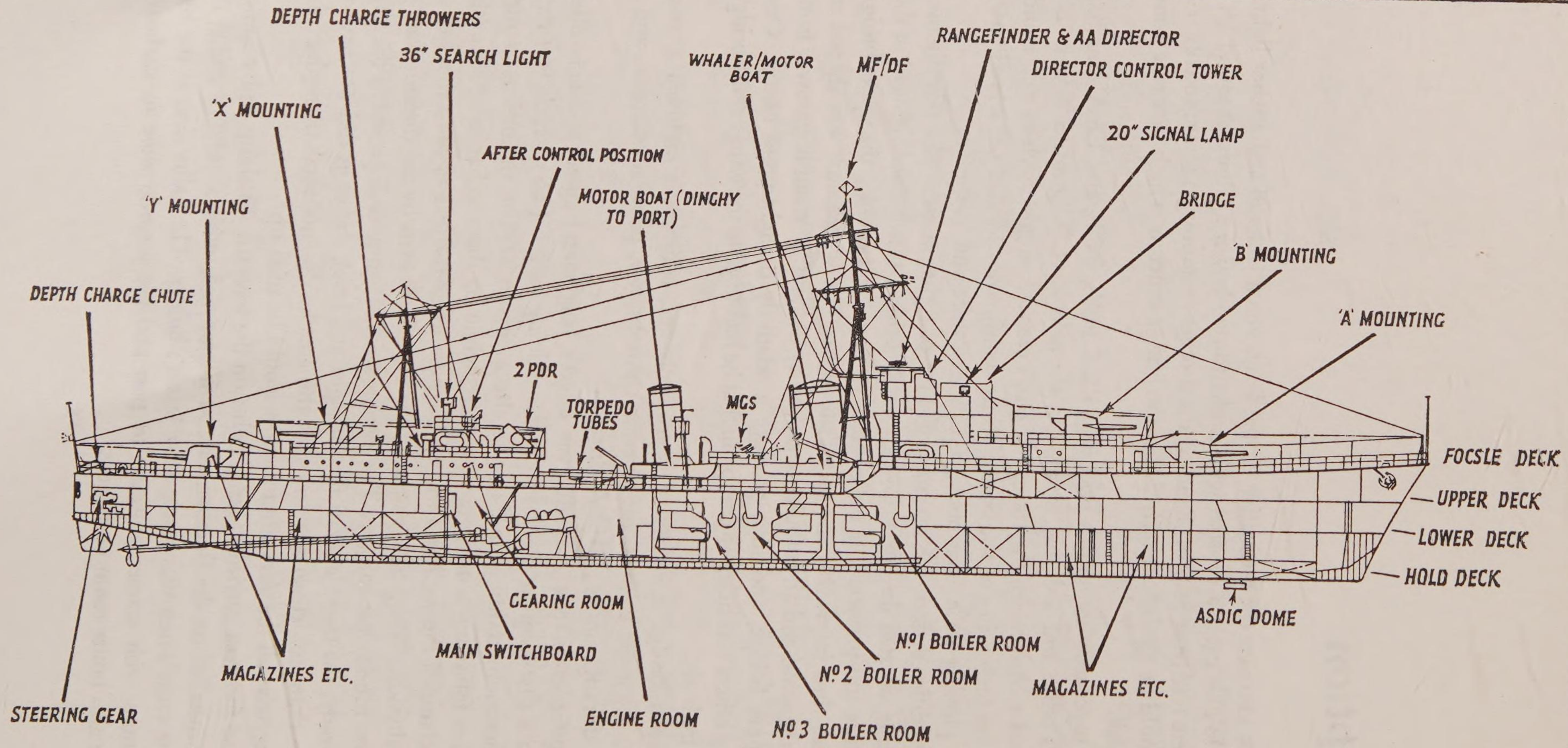
Inside the superstructure on this level were the CPO's, PO's, and ERA's messes, the engineer's office and a drying room. On the next level, 'B' gun deck, was "B" mounting, and a blast screen to protect 'A' gun's crew. A single machine gun could be mounted on each wing of the bridge while within were located the wheelhouse, signal office, plotting table, charthouse, CO's sea cabin, and D/F office.

The bridge differed from the majority of ships of earlier classes. The wheelhouse, instead of being situated directly below the upper bridge, was located forward of the bridge structure and protected by bullet-proof plating. This enabled the upper bridge to be lowered, thus improving the ship's silhouette. The wheelhouse was shaped so as to deflect the wind and air turbulence caused by 'A' and 'B' mountings, away from the open upper bridge, and thus produce a relatively draught-proof bridge. One commanding officer was heard to complain that he had to go to the wings of the bridge to get some fresh air.

On the open bridge a variety of instruments and equipment included a 20in signal lamp, the asdic cabinet, the director control tower, pompom directors and a combined 12ft range-finder and AA director.

This rangefinder-director estimated the target's height and speed and controlled AA fire via a fuse-keeping clock in the transmitting station (TS) which sent data regarding elevation, training and fuse to the 4.7in guns. The mountings trained round together following a mechanical pointer, while another mechanical device (the fuse setter) clamped the shell and rotated the nose to set the fuse to burst the shell at the correct altitude. When all was ready, the guns were fired by the director, rate of fire being ten rounds per minute. The system worked quite well provided the ship remained steady, the target aircraft flew straight and level, the guns did not have to fire at more than 40° elevation, and that the attacks did not total more than five minutes otherwise all the AA ammunition would be used up.

The tripod foremast carried fighting lights on the foreyard. Flashing and steaming lights were installed on the foretopmast and foretopyard, with a MF/DF coil at the foretop. The crow's-nest was reached by Jacob's ladder. The galley was at the base of the foremast with seamen's urinals to port and the torpedo store to starboard. There were also boiler room vents here.



A Tribal of 1938-9

The forward funnel, taking smoke from No. 1 and 2 boiler rooms, was flanked by a motor-boat to port and the whaler to starboard. The dinghy could be stowed underneath the whaler, or on the port side of the after funnel. Next came the machine-gun position where a carley float could be fixed athwartships over more boiler room vents. The after funnel exhausted No. 3 boiler, with the other motor-boat to starboard.

Abaft the torpedo tubes and torpedo crane, the after superstructure contained the engineers' workshop, sick-bay, CO's pantry, his day cabin, sleeping cabin and bath-room. Above these compartments were the after pompom position, the searchlight and after conning position, two nests of carley floats and two depth charge throwers. The tripod mainmast carried a yard, a gaff and a Jacob's ladder. 'X' mounting's blast screen was fitted with a fog light. Right aft on the upper deck, was 'Y' mounting and the depth-charge chutes. Gangways were stowed here (for rigging aft or amid-ships) and there was an ensign staff.

Due to the curve of the bow only the upper deck existed from the stem to water-tight bulkhead (WTB) No. 2 below decks, forming the forepeak and lamp and paint room below decks. From WTB No. 2 to the fo'c'sle break there were three decks: upper, lower and hold.

The whole upper deck between WTB No. 2 and 7 was given over to crew space. Then came a complex area housing the TS (gunnery nerve centre of the ship), the fire control station, the canteen and its issue room, oilskin room, potato store, wash-rooms and heads. More crew space ran through to WTB No. 9 where the fo'c'sle ended. The lower deck in this part of the ship contained the cable locker, No. 1 central store and the asdic room, the rest of this level being taken up with crew space as far as WTB No. 9. Below this was located the petrol tank compartment, No. 2 central store over a fresh water tank and No. 1 and 2 provision and cold rooms over the asdic dome (each Tribal carried enough stores for four months). There were two 4.7in magazines, two 4.7in shellrooms, the 2pdr magazine and No. 1 and 2 fuel oil tanks.

No. 3 and 4 fuel oil tanks and a diesel tank came next under the stoker PO's mess, gyro compass and low power rooms.

From WTB No. 10 to WTB No. 15 there were five very large compartments. Firstly, No. 1 boiler room; then No. 2 boiler room over fresh and reserve feed water tanks, followed by No. 3 boiler room and then the engine room (also with reserve feed water tanks). From the gearing and switchboard rooms twin shafts ran in tunnels through No. 5 to 8 fuel oil tanks to plummer-block and gland compartments, and thence to the propellers.

The rest of the lower deck was made up of the 2nd W/T office, gunner and torpedo stores, torpedo head room, engineer-officer's cabin, ship's office, wardroom, stewards' mess, provision room and officers' cabins. An unfortunate feature of their design was their ceramic washbasins – they all cracked when depth-charges were dropped and later on were replaced with stainless steel ones.

The effect of shock waves due to non-contact underwater explosions (such as depth-charges, mines and near misses by shells and bombs) was not appreciated until

later in the war. All sorts of items, especially the seatings of auxiliary machinery, and often main machinery itself, were affected in ships of all classes. Flying splinters from exploding projectiles of all kinds also resulted in serious damage, often starting fires if they penetrated and short-circuited electric cables.

There were then two more 4.7in magazines and shellrooms, the captain's and wardroom store, and the spirit room (provisioned for three months). These compartments were on the hold deck. The steering gear compartment, over the rudder, was the aftermost one in the ship.

HMS Afridi

Second of name

Builders: Vickers-Armstrong, High Walker Yard, The Tyne
Engined by: Vickers-Armstrong, Barrow-in-Furness
Ordered: 10th March 1936
Laid Down: 9th June 1936
Launched: 8th June 1937 (by Lady Foster)
Commissioned: 3rd May 1938

AFRIDI WAS the first Tribal to be completed. An engineer officer and other specialists had been standing by her since February 1937, watching the progress of her construction, suggesting minor on-the-spot modifications, and generally getting to know the ship very, very well.

After her launch, fitting out began at an alongside berth. Her engines and boilers were lowered into position, guns mounted, wiring completed and all sorts of equipment from fire control to galley ovens installed, checked and tested. On 11th December 1937 Captain Creswell was appointed in command and *Afridi* neared her completion. She was drydocked and painted, and carried out basin trials, compass swinging, an inclining experiment (to determine her centre of gravity) and a tilt test (to check the accuracy of the gun mountings). Then she moved downriver for sea trials off the Tyne. There were turning trials, full-power trials, stopping and starting trials. Her acceptance trials took place on 29th April 1938 in a rising gale, but she behaved very well, although pounding heavily when steaming at full speed against the sea. She returned to the Tyne, Captain Creswell signed a receipt for the ship and *Afridi* was now officially a warship of the Royal Navy.

There was a commissioning party and the next day *Afridi* sailed for Portsmouth. She had a rough passage south, heavy seas washing away the paint forward and on the forefunnel, but Captain Creswell was very proud of his new ship as he brought her into Portsmouth on 1st May 1938. Another captain later remarked that commanding a Tribal was rather like owning a Rolls-Royce. No other ship would be quite the same.

The rest of the ship's company joined and *Afridi* was formally commissioned on 3rd May.

There followed three weeks of preparation, storing, ammunitioning and working-up. There were more tests and trials, compass-swinging again, direction-finding trials, charts to be checked and flags to be listed. Besides an official inspection, the new ship was shown off to admirals, ordinary seamen and newspaper correspondents. At Portland there were gunnery trials, torpedo exercises and asdic tests.

At last *Afridi* sailed from Portland on 27th May 1938. She called at Gibraltar and arrived at Malta to join the Mediterranean Fleet on 3rd June 1938.

Destroyers at Malta usually moored in Sliema Harbour, proceeding to sea most days for exercises, sometimes alone and sometimes in company with other ships. Every aspect of the ship's routine was tested in dummy runs and under realistic conditions. Towing, damage control, cyphering, signalling, gunnery, chartwork, boatwork and a host of other evolutions were practised. And all the time the ship had to be kept clean and painted and her crew smart and fed.

The Mediterranean, like most of the world in 1938 was a troubled place. In Spain, General Franco's Nationalists, aided by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, were rebelling against the Republicans, aided by Communist Russia. There was an Arab revolt in Palestine against the British Mandate and the establishment of a Jewish National Home. In the Central Mediterranean, Mussolini's expansionist ambitions threatened Britain's sea communications with the Suez Canal and thence to the Persian Gulf and India. The "Gentleman's Agreement" between Great Britain and Italy seemed to guarantee friendship between the two countries, but it was still deemed necessary for a powerful force to be maintained in the area lest the friendship suddenly soured. This presence was the principal role of the Mediterranean Fleet, but such matters of high policy seemed very remote from *Afridi* on 11th and 12th June 1938. She anchored in the Comino Channel and the Royal Navy's latest destroyer was opened to visitors from Gozo.

On 4th July 1938 *Afridi* left Malta to patrol off the Spanish Mediterranean coast. Air and submarine attacks (possibly committed by Italian forces) on British shipping in Spanish territorial waters, had resulted in the establishment of certain defined routes off the Spanish coast in September 1937. They were patrolled by British and French destroyers and aircraft with orders to fire at and sink any 'pirates'. The attacks on merchant ships along these routes promptly ceased, but the patrols, augmented by Italian warships as a sign of good faith, were maintained.

Afridi, like all other RN vessels in these waters, had broad red, white and blue bands painted on 'B' mounting so that Republican and Nationalist aircraft could identify her as British and therefore neutral. *Afridi* called at Palma, Barcelona, Marseilles, Gandia and Alperello, before returning to Palma and Malta. Almost immediately she took Rear-Admiral Tovey (commanding the Mediterranean Fleet destroyer flotillas) to take part in fleet exercises in the Ionian Sea. These manoeuvres and subsequent visits to Greek ports ended on 25th August 1938 and *Afridi* then stayed at Malta until 14th September 1938.

Off Delos in the Cyclades on 18th September 1938 *Afridi* met *Devonshire* and *Cossack*, who had by now arrived in the Mediterranean. The three ships proceeded through the Dardanelles to Istanbul, arriving the next day for a formal visit.

Suddenly the Czechoslovak Crisis was upon the world and the Royal Navy prepared for war. The rest of that particular Black Sea cruise was cancelled on 21st September and the ships sailed for Alexandria.

Although Mussolini played the role of an impartial mediator at the Munich conference on 29th September, Italy's position was too uncertain to be relied upon. If she did join Hitler, her powerful air force could overwhelm Malta. The Mediterranean Fleet therefore concentrated at Alexandria, a comparatively undefended and ill-equipped base, but better situated for the defence of the Suez Canal. Haifa was being developed as a base for light naval forces.

Afridi and *Cossack* remained based at Alexandria until 24th October. They paid a visit to Larnaka in Cyprus, called again at Alexandria and then arrived at Malta where *Afridi* was drydocked on 9th November.

It often seems that warships spend a lot of time in dock. In fact, this periodic refitting is vital for a warship. Main engines are working all the time a ship is at sea, and even when she stops, anchors or berths alongside, dynamos, lights, fans, and a hundred small machines are still running. So in a refit every item is checked and repaired, possibly replaced or modified in the light of experience. Damage caused by weather, the enemy or even the shock of firing the ship's own weapons is made good. The boilers are cleaned and the ship's bottom is scraped to remove the marine growth which can cut her speed by several knots and burn up precious fuel oil. Firemain, condenser and other outlets and inlets have to be cleared of the barnacles which clog them. Her hull is repainted with anti-fouling composition. New equipment is installed and living accommodation redecorated and perhaps rearranged.

Of course, some ships seem to be unlucky and have more than their fair share of trouble. Others serve in rough weather and fierce action requiring only a minimum of repair. The Tribals were no different from other destroyers in this respect, and perhaps had a better record than most considering they were worked so hard.

Most of the 1st Tribal Destroyer Flotilla had arrived by the time *Afridi* was undocked on 17th December. *Nubian* was the last to join on 2nd February 1939 and flotilla exercises could now begin in earnest.

Although no larger than other ships of the class, *Afridi* served as flotilla leader of the 1st Tribal Destroyer Flotilla. Besides commanding his own ship, Captain Creswell led the flotilla in the same way as an admiral directs the movements of his squadron or fleet. Captain (D) was also charged with superintending 'with great attention' the ships in his flotilla, their seaworthiness, their battle efficiency and the discipline of their crews. In this task he was assisted by the flotilla leader's First Lieutenant (who relieved Captain (D) of much of the running of the senior ship), by a secretary, by extra signalmen and by a staff of officers specialising in gunnery, navigation, asdic, torpedoes (including electrics), signals, wireless/telegraphy, engineering and ordnance. These specialists were responsible for advising the ships' captains on the personnel and equipment in their branch throughout the flotilla. Some officers doubled these duties with running their own department in *Afridi* and some were accommodated in one of the other ships. On the whole they stayed fairly close to Captain (D). If the flotilla leader was sunk or damaged, and Captain (D) moved to another ship, his staff usually went with him.

A surgeon and a schoolmaster (for the education of boy seamen) were attached to

each division, the Tribals being the first destroyers to take boy seamen as part complement. When war came the strain of being on watch as lookouts or messengers for long hours (wearing even for grown men) proved too exhausting and the practice gradually died out.

The Tribals were also the first destroyer flotilla to have a chaplain accommodated in one of their ships. He took up his appointment dressed in the traditional top hat and frock coat and was promptly greeted as "The Missionary to the Tribes". Accommodated in *Sikh*, he tried to spend some time aboard each destroyer in turn. In harbour he conducted services aboard each destroyer and organised visits to the Pyramids, Cleopatra's Bath and other places of interest ashore. He also arranged sports fixtures and achieved the notoriety of being sent out of the water during a water-polo match – for fouling.

The flotilla leader was expected to set an example of efficiency to the rest of the flotilla, but there were compensations for this extra responsibility. The senior ship not only led the flotilla to sea, she also led the other ships into harbour and was usually the first to go alongside the oiler or ammunition jetty. Her work had often finished and her liberty men on their way ashore, before the most junior ship or 'canteen boat' had berthed.

On 23rd February 1939, *Afridi* took *Gurkha*, *Mohawk*, *Sikh*, *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Zulu* and *Nubian* to Gibraltar where the Mediterranean and Home Fleets were gathering for combined exercises. These manoeuvres were in two parts, the first from 28th February to 3rd March 1939 and the second from 6th to 10th March. With over a hundred ships and thirteen admirals taking part, there were plenty of opportunities for every conceivable evolution, including wearing gasmasks while fighting the ship. The fleets (which included *Somali*, *Ashanti*, and *Eskimo* from the Home Fleet) stayed at Gibraltar for staff conferences and then began to disperse on 18th March.

The Home Fleet returned to the U.K. for Easter leave while the Mediterranean Fleet split up into ones and twos and began its Spring cruise to Riviera ports. Off Palma on the night of 21/22nd March, *Afridi* and *Penelope* were transferring mails when the two ships touched. The cruiser had her bows stove in while *Afridi* was holed above the anchor. Both ships had to be docked for repairs and *Afridi* was at Malta when the next international crisis flared up.

On Good Friday, 7th April, Italy invaded Albania. The Mediterranean Fleet, dispersed among many ports, including Italian harbours, was alerted. All crews were summoned back to their ships, which sailed immediately. The destroyers returned to Malta to exchange dummy torpedo heads and practice shells for a full load of live ammunition. By the end of April, the entire fleet had concentrated south of Malta and then headed for Alexandria. The Western Mediterranean ships were reinforced by a French squadron to watch the German force that had arrived in Spanish waters. For the most of May, the Mediterranean Fleet stood by ready for action until the crisis was over and peacetime cruises were resumed, although the ships were not so widely dispersed again.

Afridi and *Gurkha* called at the advanced base at Mersa Matruh from 26th to 29th May and on 7th July *Afridi*, *Gurkha*, *Mohawk* and *Sikh* anchored in Phaleron Bay, escorting the carrier *Glorious* on a formal visit to Athens. By the end of July the Mediterranean Fleet was back at Malta, storing, refitting, and entertaining a French Squadron which had brought the French C-in-C Vice-Admiral Ollive, to confer with Admiral Cunningham.

On 7th August, the Mediterranean Fleet joined the C-in-C in the Aegean. Admiral Cunningham, escorted in *Warspite* by *Cossack*'s division of Tribals, was returning from a formal visit to Istanbul, a visible demonstration of a closer relationship between Britain and Turkey. Between Crete and Cyprus, the Fleet practised intercepting mock Italian convoys and then went on to carry out bombardment and anti-aircraft exercises off Cyprus. The Queen Bee target aircraft often seemed to have a charmed life, although some observers considered that it was the inaccuracy of anti-aircraft fire that accounted for its good fortune. The Fleet returned to Alexandria on 15th August.

Now the period of waiting for war began as German propaganda against Poland reached a crescendo. The Mediterranean Fleet was kept at instant readiness, efficiency being maintained by continual exercises. These included a mock mustard gas attack in which aircraft sprayed certain ships with a harmless aerosol which had to be eliminated. Meanwhile warning telegrams were arriving, bringing war signal books, recognition signals and various other precautionary measures into force.

It was still believed that Italy would join Germany if war came, so the Mediterranean was closed to all British merchant shipping, and many vessels, mainly tankers, began to accumulate at Suez and Aden. To protect them *Afridi*, *Gurkha*, *Mohawk* and *Sikh* with four G-class destroyers passed through the Suez Canal. The Gs soon sailed from Suez for Aden, followed later by the Tribals. They were steaming down a hot, placid Red Sea off Massawa with most hands enjoying a Sunday afternoon siesta on the fo'c'sle when the signal came through "TOTAL GERMANY ® TOTAL GERMANY." The Second World War had begun.

As Italy promptly took measures to prove her neutrality, destroyer reinforcements were not required in the Red Sea so the Tribals returned almost immediately to Alexandria after chasing a darkened ship, which proved to be a P. & O liner out from Jibouti. The convoy system had been instituted but the expected U-boat attacks did not materialise. Contraband control brought complaints from Italy, but they were dealt with tactfully, although it soon became apparent that some cargoes were finding their way to Germany. By the end of September the employment of Tribals on blockade patrols and convoy escorts (which were in any case discontinued by the end of 1939) could no longer be justified and the 4th DF was ordered home.

From now on the flotilla virtually lost its identity and each Tribal was detailed individually for duties by the flag officer under whose command she came.

Afridi and *Gurkha* made a very fast passage to the UK (oiling at Malta and Gibraltar), drew Home Fleet charts at Portland and headed through the Channel to fuel at Harwich. Off Beachy Head they got an asdic contact and attacked it. The

echo disappeared and it was believed they had sunk a U-boat, but the kill was not confirmed – there were so many uncharted First World War wrecks that produced a satisfying echo, while the inexperience and excitement of the early war days led many cold-water layers and shoals of fish to be identified as U-boats. However, it is better to take no risks and it is fair to say that the early U-boat captains had just as much to learn.

For most of October and November 1939, several ships of the 4th DF were based at Immingham, escorting, often in thick fog, East Coast convoys between Methil and Southend. They also formed, with the 2nd Cruiser Squadron and 7th DF, a striking force poised to intercept a possible German invasion of Holland.

In December 1939, the 4th DF moved up to Rosyth and was principally employed on escorting large convoys of many nationalities to and from Norway. They would take an ON convoy across the North Sea from Methil and wait off the Norwegian coast, often in very rough weather, for the return HN convoy to leave Norwegian territorial waters. The convoy usually split up off the northern coast of Scotland, one part going down the east coast and the other heading for west coast ports or to a dispersal-point in the Atlantic. Instructions to merchantmen had to be chalked on a blackboard, which was then displayed to each merchant ship in turn, a procedure occasioned by the lack in those early war days of an adequate convoy signal book. The Tribals were intended to fight off air, surface and submarine attack, but actual hostile encounters were rare. Occasionally the destroyers would escort capital ships dashing off unsuccessfully to intercept a reported foray by German warships into the North Sea or the Atlantic. There were air raids, including one on New Year's Day when *Afridi* was anchored at the fuelling base at Sullom Voe in the Shetlands. It was reported that the only casualty was a sheep killed by high-angle gunfire which could not elevate enough to clear the surrounding hills. There were frequent U-boat alarms which came to naught and the ever-present menace from magnetic mines; a threat which seemed to have no counter and which proved very wearing on the nerves.

The Tribals' machinery was also suffering from the effects of high-speed running for long periods in rough weather. The bottom plating of feed tanks developed leaks while metal fatigue and vibration caused turbine blades to fracture – splinters caught in filters were usually the first sign of these failures. The cure was the replacement of the damaged row with specially strengthened blades fitted into a larger rotor groove. The dockyards usually repaired the feed tanks' bottom plating at the same time, while some Tribals were degaussed during these repairs as a protection against magnetic mines. (All of them had been degaussed by the Spring of 1940.)

Afridi was docked at West Hartlepool for these repairs from 17th January to 19th March 1940. Captain Vian, the new Captain D4, exchanged ships with Commander Sherbrooke of *Cossack*. When *Afridi*'s refit was over, the two commanding officers returned to their respective ships and within a week, *Afridi* had taken *Nubian* on a U-boat hunt off Scapa – unsuccessful, like so many other similar excursions.

The Tribals would probably have participated in the proposed troop landing in

Norway to help the Finns against the USSR. Certainly they figured in the next scheme, Operation Wilfred, which involved laying mines in Norwegian waters to force German merchant ships outside territorial limits so they could be intercepted by the Navy. The 4th DF was ordered to escort the 1st CS to Bergen and Stavanger where troops were to be disembarked ready to repel the expected retaliatory German invasion. This was Plan R4.

Operation Wilfred was delayed from 5th to 8th April. During this postponement the local Roman Catholic priest visited Rosyth to minister to the Roman Catholic personnel in the force.

On the night of 7/8th April, reports were received that German ships were at sea. As a result the 1st CS hurriedly landed those troops that had been embarked at Rosyth and sailed with *Afridi*, *Gurkha*, *Mohawk* and *Sikh* to carry out an uneventful but rough patrol in the centre of the North Sea.

Early on the morning of the 9th they joined the main body of the Home Fleet, then being escorted by *Somali*, *Matabele*, *Mashona*, *Tartar* and the Polish destroyers *Burza*, *Blyskawica* and *Grom*. *Ashanti*, *Maori* and *Fortune* were escorting *Warspite* on her way to join the C-in-C, but portions of the destroyer force were soon detached on various missions. *Tartar* and the three Poles were sent to escort a merchant convoy that had already left Bergen for the UK. Then at midday *Glasgow*, *Manchester*, *Sheffield* and *Southampton* with *Afridi*, *Gurkha*, *Mohawk*, *Sikh*, *Somali*, *Mashona*, and *Matabele* were detached to destroy German assault ships landing troops at Bergen. The operation was cancelled about 1400 and the ships turned back but came under heavy air attack. The northerly gale, throwing spray over guns and directors, emasculated the destroyers' AA fire. In an attempt to come round onto a steadier course and provide a stabler platform for his gunners, Commander Buzzard took *Gurkha* out of the screen. She was immediately pounced upon by the bombers and sunk – the first Tribal to be lost. Further air attacks on the rest of the force and on the Home Fleet farther north, continued until dark and the expenditure of AA ammunition was very heavy. The force patrolled off Bergen for the night and then returned to the Shetlands to fuel on the 10th.

The force sailed again for Norway the next day. While the cruisers spent 12th and 13th April searching for enemy warships reported off Stadlandet, *Somali* took the destroyers to investigate Alesund, Andalsnes, Molde and Namsos. Not one of the little ports was really suitable for disembarking one of the two expeditionary forces who were supposed to pinch out the German troops at Trondheim. However, *Somali* was left behind at Namsos with a landing-party of bluejackets and Royal Marines to establish a base on the 14th and enemy bombing began.

For the next month, the lengthening days became a dateless series of air raids, punctuated by brief lulls as the German bombers spent the next few minutes flying back to their base at Trondheim. Then in they came again, over the snow-covered mountains to bomb and machine-gun. The 4.7in LA/HA guns could only bear on the aircraft for a few seconds and then they were overhead, beyond the 40° elevation of the destroyers' main armament. Only the pompoms and machine guns could fire

as the destroyers turned towards the Stukas, plummeting down with sirens screaming. The ships twisted and turned, the dives became steeper and steeper and as the pilots were forced to pull out to avoid crashing into the sea, their aim was spoiled and the bombs missed. Then the aircraft would be gone, one perhaps trailing smoke. On the mirror waters of the fiord, the ships were left to pick up survivors from a sinking consort and to take stock of fast emptying magazines, until in a few minutes' time the bombers were back.

On the 15th Major-General Carton de Wiart arrived with his two staff officers (Colonel Peter Fleming and Captain Lindsay) to take command ashore at Namsos. Their Sunderland landed in the middle of a raid by four Ju88s and two He111s. The flying-boat was machine-gunned and *Somali*, General Carton de Wiart's intended temporary GHQ, nearmissed.

Meanwhile, *Afridi*, *Mashona*, *Matabele* and *Sikh* had joined cruisers and destroyers in escorting the troopships *Empress of Australia* and *Chrobry* (carrying the 1st/4th Lincolnshires and the Hallamshires) to Lillesjona. This tiny fiord was a hundred miles farther north than Namsos and therefore a safer anchorage. The troops would be ferried by the destroyers to Namsos so that the big liners would not be exposed to air attack. They arrived there on the 16th and the destroyers began fuelling from *War Pindari*, an oiler brought in by *Nubian*. (If an oiler was not available the destroyers usually fuelled from cruisers when convenient.)

Almost immediately the first air raids on Lillesjona began, continuing while *Nubian* and *Sikh* embarked some of the troops and took them to Namsos and Bangsund. They were attacked again on the way and arrived there on the night of 16/17th April. *Mashona* and *Matabele* followed with more personnel from *Empress of Australia* and that ship was able to sail for home after transferring the remaining troops (but not 170 tons of stores) to *Chrobry*. *Sikh* and *Matabele* embarked the RN personnel who had been relieved by the Army at Namsos and the same night *Somali* went to Lillesjona to transfer General Carton de Wiart and his staff to *Afridi*, his new GHQ. Having expended all her AA, practice and starshell ammunition in the defence of Namsos, *Somali* sailed for the UK to make good the defects caused by so many nearmisses.

Chrobry spent the daylight hours of the 17th out to sea and was then taken into Namsos on 17/18th April. Most of her troops and stores were ferried ashore by *Mashona* and *Matabele* and she was escorted out to sea again before dawn by *Nubian*.

On 18/19th the last stores were unloaded from *Chrobry* at Namsos and *Mohawk* arrived, her decks piled high with ammunition for the other Tribals. *Afridi* sent General Carton de Wiart and local Norwegian coastal pilots ashore and sailed for Scapa Flow to fuel and ammunition. Most of the Tribals accompanied her, escorting a convoy en route, although *Nubian* was sent back to Namsos on the 20/21st with despatches for the French Chasseurs Alpins ferried ashore from their troopships by *Maori* and French destroyers the previous night. The place was ablaze and useless as a base, and *Nubian* escorted a French transport away from Namsenfiord. *Nubian* was soon ordered back to provide AA fire until relieved on the 22nd by *Auckland*.

Meanwhile *Afridi* and other destroyers had escorted a convoy, which included a petrol tanker with a maximum speed of 5 knots, to Andalsnes. When they got there the place was in flames and the convoy was ordered back to Scapa Flow after ammunition had been transferred to *Black Swan*. The ships were bombed almost continually in Romsdalfiord, but only suffered splinter damage.

After fuelling and ammunitioning *Afridi*, *Sikh*, *Nubian*, *Maori*, *Grenade*, *Griffin*, *Kelly* and two other Ks left Scapa Flow again, this time to escort the evacuation convoys to Namsos and Romsdalfiord. En route, *Nubian* shot down a Fleet Air Arm Skua which had approached too close – in a sky apparently full of German aircraft, the destroyers were taking no chances. *Nubian* then picked up the crew.

Dense fog during the night of 1/2nd May forced all the Namsos ships to turn back except *Maori*, who located the entrance to the fiord and was then joined by *Kelly*, *Grenade* and *Griffin*. Together they felt their way up Namsenfiord, using their asdic to fix their position, but they were bombed as soon as they cleared the fog at dawn. For most of the day they sheltered in the mist in the narrow part of the fiord, but *Maori*'s masthead was visible above the fog and she was nearmissed and damaged.

At dusk on the 2nd *Afridi* led in three transports followed by *Nubian* and the cruiser *York*. Two transports went alongside the stone quay at Namsos, while the third remained off the town, receiving troops ferried out from a wooden pier by the destroyers. Many seamen volunteered to go ashore and drive trucks up the road to collect soldiers who might otherwise have been left behind. By 0200 on the 3rd, all except *Afridi* had left to rendezvous with the covering forces off the Norwegian coast. By 0230, *Afridi* had embarked the rearguard (a colonel and 35 men of the Hallamshires) and had sailed, shelling vehicles abandoned on the jetty as she moved away. It was getting light.

At 0800 fifty Ju87s and Ju88s began a continuous attack on the convoy, which by now was well out to sea. The French destroyer *Bison* was hit at 1000 and her forward magazine blew up. *Afridi* joined *Grenade* in rescuing survivors and in fighting off two more air attacks. At first the two destroyers closed *Bison*'s stern, playing hoses on the fires, but the spreading flames and the increasing list forced them to back off and lower boats. *Imperial* arrived to help and, in spite of blazing fuel oil on the surface of the water, the Frenchmen were picked up. At 1130 *Afridi*, with 69 survivors on board, sank the burning hulk and led the other two away.

Another Ju87 divebombing attack developed just as they caught up with the convoy at 1400. The target for two aircraft coming in from each side, *Afridi* could not turn towards both. One bomb hit her in No. 1 boiler room starting a severe fire at the after end of the messdecks. Another bomb hit the port side just forward of the bridge. Some trapped men got out through this hole until it was submerged. *Imperial* came alongside and *Griffin* stood by to carry out rescue work.

At 1445 *Afridi* went down bow-first. She took with her 49 officers and men, 13 soldiers and over 30 *Bison* survivors. It was the second anniversary of her commissioning.

Commanding Officers

Capt G. H. Creswell, DSC, RN 11th December 1937 – 31st December 1939.
Capt P. L. Vian, RN 1st January 1940 – 17th January 1940.
Cdr R. St. V. Sherbrooke, RN 18th January 1940 – 18th March 1940.
Capt P. L. Vian, RN 19th March 1940 – 3rd May 1940.

Pennant Numbers

L07 April 1938 – December 1938
F07 January 1939 – May 1940

HMAS Arunta

First of name

Builders: Cockatoo Docks & Engineering Pty, Sydney
Engined by: Cockatoo Docks & Engineering Pty, Sydney
Laid Down: 15th November 1939
Launched: 30th November 1940
Commissioned: 30th March 1942

On 16th May 1942 the Japanese were reaching the limits of their breathtaking advance. Their assault ships would get no nearer Australia than the Battle of the Coral Sea. In Sydney, the brand-new destroyer *Arunta* – trials, workup and a refit behind her – was hurrying out to sea. Like the other two Australian Tribals, she had been intended to help the RAN defend Australia's coastal shipping under the general cover of the British Eastern Fleet based at Singapore. Now there was no Eastern Fleet, no base at Singapore and the RAN was engaged in theatres all over the world. *Arunta* was immediately in the forefront of battle, but her war was destined to be one of advance – a rough, violent and uncertain passage, but nevertheless forwards.

Her immediate task was of local importance. The *SS Wellen* had been shelled by a Japanese submarine. *Arunta*, with the Dutch cruiser *Tromp* and the US destroyer *Perkins*, was ordered to find and sink this submarine. Their search was unsuccessful but as there had been a number of such attacks, the three ships remained based at Sydney to defend coastal convoys. From 18th to 24th May, *Arunta* and *Tromp* escorted four Dutch merchantmen carrying Australian troops to Port Moresby, the main base for a counter offensive against the Japanese in New Guinea. Another typical convoy sailed from Newcastle on 8th June 1942 and was escorted by *Arunta* and the minesweeper *Kalgoorlie* round to Melbourne.

The Japanese struck first in New Guinea with a double attack over the Owen Stanley Range and around the coast. On 24th August, *Arunta* had arrived with the *SS Tasman* at Gili Gili on the south-east tip of New Guinea. *Tasman* was unloading stores from Port Moresby at the new base when an enemy convoy was reported approaching the area. *Arunta* was immediately ordered to escort *Tasman* back to Port Moresby. The destroyer was not allowed to return to Milne Bay, although the Japanese put ashore an assault force there on the 25/26th. Instead she had to stay on anti-submarine patrol to protect shipping at Port Moresby.

At 1115 on the 29th the *SS Malaita* was hit by a torpedo when leaving Port

Moresby just as *Arunta* took station ahead. The destroyer began an asdic sweep while the *SS Matafele* and the storeship *Portrero* tried to tow the 3,310-ton ship to safety. *Arunta* carried out four depth-charge attacks and at 1430 a large quantity of oil bubbled to the surface. Satisfied that the submarine was out of action, Commander Morrow went back to help tow *Malaita* into Port Moresby.

The next day *Arunta* went up the coast to collect the *SS Theofanos Livanos* from Hall Sound, where she had been diverted because of the submarine hunt. Then on the 31st *Tasman* was again taken to Milne Bay where bitter fighting was in progress. The two ships arrived there unmolested on 2nd September, in spite of reports that Japanese ships were lurking close by.

Arunta returned with *Tasman* to Port Moresby and then sailed to meet *Anshun*, *S'Jacob* and *HMAS Swan* from Townsville, who had been delayed by the danger of attack from Japanese warships. *Anshun* began unloading her ammunition and stores alongside the little wharf at Gili Gili on 6th September, while *Arunta* and *Swan* screened *S'Jacob* off Milne Bay. At 2200 that night, Japanese warships broke into the bay, sank *Anshun*, ignored an illuminated hospital ship and shelled the Australians ashore.

There was little *Arunta* could do at dawn but embark the *Anshun* survivors and take them to Townsville. She soon left there on the 9th to escort the transports *Van Heemskerk* and *Japara* to Milne Bay. This convoy was covered by a task force against the Japanese warships reported in the area, but it became evident that their violent incursion into Milne Bay on the 6/7th had been to cover the evacuation of the Japanese troops ashore.

There was further heartening news at Port Moresby. *Arunta*'s submarine contact had continued to give off oil and bubbles for several days and the destruction of the submarine was confirmed. It was later proved to be the 700-ton RO-33, which had earlier sunk the little steamer *Mamutu*, machine-gunning men, women and children as they struggled in the water.

For the rest of October, *Arunta* was employed on troop convoys between Queensland and New Guinea, as the Australians gradually pushed the Japanese back over the Kokoda Trail and thence to a full withdrawal into coastal defences around Buna. Then began the task of building up forces for the capture and subsequent exploitation of the Buna area.

A break in the convoy routine occurred on 22/23rd October when *Arunta* and *Stuart* took Australian troops from Milne Bay for a night landing at Mud Bay on Goodenough Island. The Japanese pulled out on the 26th.

By November, *Arunta* was in need of a refit but the situation in New Guinea was still too critical for her to return to Sydney. The ship's company had to make do with the facilities at Port Moresby before returning to more convoy work.

At the beginning of 1943, *Arunta* went round to Darwin for a hazardous mission which had already caused the RAN loss. She embarked eight army assault craft and left at 0700 on 9th January. At 0130 on 10th January she anchored off Quicras Beach on Timor to embark a guerrilla force that was being hard-pressed by the

Japanese. After several boats had been capsized or swamped by the waves, most of them kept off the beach and picked up the people who swam out through the surf. It took a long time; it would soon be light, but still *Arunta* waited as Commander Morrow expected to run into bad weather thirty miles off shore. At last at 0630, 282 soldiers, 11 women and children and 20 Portuguese civilians were aboard and *Arunta* sailed. Forty minutes later it was broad daylight and clear blue skies, but there were rain squalls about 20 miles away. Commander Morrow headed towards them and from then on visibility was never more than two miles all the way to Darwin. They arrived that evening unsighted by aircraft.

At the end of January, *Arunta* went to Sydney for refit. When she returned to her convoy escort duties between Queensland and New Guinea at the beginning of March, she was accompanied by her new sistership, *Warramunga*. The two destroyers spent March and April on this work but in May they joined Task Force 74 in the Coral Sea. The Battle of the Bismarck Sea in March, and the Japanese I-Go aerial offensive seemed to presage powerful strikes against the Allied advances in New Guinea and the Solomons. Besides *Warramunga* and *Arunta*, TF74 was composed of the cruisers *Australia*, *Hobart* and *USS Phoenix*, and the US destroyers *Perkins*, *Conyngham*, *Mahan*, *Flusser*, *Drayton*, *Smith* and *Lamson*. In practice the composition of TF74 was always changing as destroyers were detached for escort duties all over the South-West Pacific. In fact by June, TF74 had dwindled to *Australia*, *Hobart*, *Warramunga*, *Arunta* and *Lamson*.

From 29th June to 4th July, they covered an unopposed landing on Woodlark and Kiriwina Islands. A fortnight later the three destroyers came under the direct control of the Seventh Fleet for patrol and escort duties. For example, on 27/28th July, *Warramunga* and *Arunta* escorted three US LSTs from Milne Bay (now the principal transit base in the South-West Pacific) to Woodlark Island. Meanwhile, on 20th July *Hobart* had been torpedoed while operating off the New Hebrides. Emergency repairs were carried out at Espiritu Santo and she was then escorted from there to Sydney by *Warramunga* and *Arunta* – a passage that took from 21st to 26th August 1943.

In October TF74 was reassembling at Milne Bay in case of a Japanese landing near Finschhafen which the Australians had just captured. Fighting continued all round the Huon Gulf and more troop convoys had to be escorted up the Queensland coast to New Guinea. *Warramunga* and *Arunta* spent most of their time on this duty, occasionally linking up with TF74 when Japanese activity hotted up. By now more and more sloops and escort vessels were becoming available for this convoy work and on 5th November, *Warramunga* and *Arunta* officially rejoined TF74. From now on they were in the vanguard of the drive across the South-West Pacific.

Australia, *Shropshire*, *Warramunga*, *Arunta*, *Helm*, *Reid*, and *Ralph Talbot* began by patrolling off the Bismarck Archipelago on 11/12th November. On the 29/30th, *Warramunga*, *Arunta* and other ships of TF74, shelled Gasmata on the south coast of New Britain.

They spent 1st to 6th December at Milne Bay preparing for the next stage in the

isolation of the Japanese base at Rabaul. There were combined exercises and then TF74 was heading north to patrol east of Arawe during the diversionary landing there on the south coast of New Britain on the 15th.

Back to Milne Bay to replenish, and then the objective was Cape Gloucester (on the western tip of New Guinea). They sailed from Milne Bay on Christmas Eve and spent Christmas Day passing through Vitiaz Strait. On 26th December US Marines went ashore at Cape Gloucester to capture the vital airfield being pounded by *Warramunga*, *Arunta* and the other covering ships.

After covering the US landing at Saidor (a hundred miles farther along the New Guinea coast) on 2nd January 1944, all the ships of TF74 took time out to refit. *Warramunga* was away from 8th January to 7th February. *Arunta* followed her to Sydney from 31st January to 2nd March. Another operation began during her absence.

Warramunga had been serving as Admiral Sir Guy Royle's despatch vessel, for much of February, taking the First Naval Member of the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board on a tour of New Guinea bases. Then on 29th February *Warramunga* left Cape Sudest accompanied by the Fletcher-class destroyer *Ammen* and two destroyer-minesweepers, *Long* and *Hamilton*. They had to escort six LSTs (each towing one LCM) – reinforcements for the American troops landing that day on the Admiralty Islands.

At 0900 on 2nd March, *Warramunga*'s convoy unloaded their engineers, artillery and infantry right into the battle still raging within a few yards of the beach at Hyane on Los Negros. *Warramunga* and *Ammen* stood by to deliver fire support while the other escorts circled round the curving island of Los Negros to enter the vast lagoon of Seeadler Harbour. They were prevented by shore guns on the northern island of Hauwei. *Warramunga*, *Ammen* and *Bush* hurried round to Hauwei and shelled the defences with 200 5in and 100 4.7in rounds – with no response or apparent effect. As soon as the minesweepers tried to enter the channel the Japanese guns opened fire again. All the ships – destroyers and sweepers – therefore returned to wait off Hyane Harbour for call-fire requests.

The destroyers were ready to intercept raiders or reinforcements trying to reach Los Negros on 2/3rd March, but nothing happened during the night. In the morning they returned to bombardment work, shelling the eastern coast of Manus, the biggest island in the Admiralties, forming the southern shore of Seeadler Harbour. The Japanese were massing for a determined onslaught on the Americans' small defensive perimeter and at 1900 the destroyers came close inshore using their automatic weapons to break up a Japanese attack along the causeway known as Skidway Road. *Warramunga* was supposed to carry out an anti-barge patrol that night, but the destroyers were first attacked by four Mitsubishi G4M Betty bombers and were then urgently recalled to Hyane Harbour. The Japanese were making their most determined night attack and the destroyers had to provide fire support. *Warramunga*'s SG radar proved very useful in locating infantry along Skidway Road. By dawn the Japanese had failed to push the Americans into the sea, although there were still several days' bitter fighting before all the Japanese were dead and Los Negros secured.

Early on the 4th *Arunta* arrived, fresh from her refit, with ten US destroyers, each carrying a hundred troops and two tons of stores. The destroyers shelled Japanese bunkers as the troops went ashore, and then withdrew arriving at Sudest the next day.

Warramunga spent a few days replenishing, but *Arunta* immediately returned with the US destroyers *Bush*, *Thorn* and *Stockton* to provide fire support during the next stage in the capture of Seeadler Harbour. For example, on the 12th they carried out pre-landing bombardments on Ndrilo and Hauwei Islands. By now the channels into Seeadler Harbour had been opened and the destroyers were inside the lagoon firing at shore targets to seaward. *Warramunga* and more US destroyers arrived on the 13th escorting an assault convoy from Cape Cretin. *Warramunga* and *Arunta* then took the empty LSTs back to Sudest, arriving there on the 15th. *Warramunga* did another round trip with a convoy to Seeadler Harbour with reinforcements for the landings on Manus and then both Tribals rejoined TF74 at Milne Bay on the 27th.

Japanese resistance in the Admiralties had been broken although the campaign did not officially end until 18th May. The capture of these islands not only 'put the cork in the bottle' that contained Rabaul, but gave the Pacific Fleet one of its biggest and safest anchorages. TF74 arrived there on 19th April, not for warlike purposes, but to refuel before escorting an attack force bound farther up the coast of New Guinea.

TF74 covered the landings at Aitape, Hollandia and Tanamerah Bay on 22nd April. *Arunta* actually shelled some Japanese barges and dumps near Tanamerah Bay, while *Warramunga* was in the force in Humboldt Bay.

TF74 continued patrolling off the beaches until the end of the month. It was intolerably hot and humid, and drinking water was often scarce. Supplies were frequently late. Shoes quickly rotted on the alternately blistering and soaking decks, and razor blades were in short supply. (*Warramunga*'s crew only shaved when returning to a 'civilised' base.) Fresh vegetables were often non-existent. Yet the landings continued – classic examples of leapfrog strategy, bypassing fortified areas so that they 'withered on the vine'.

It did not take long for Hollandia to be established as a base, although the officers' club was only a collection of army tents pitched on the old pilings of a deserted native village, itself built on a reef and only accessible by boat. On 16th May, *Australia*, *Shropshire*, *Warramunga*, *Arunta*, *Mullany* and *Ammen* left Hollandia in the next assault force. The following day they shelled Sarmi airstrip and Sawar, prior to the landings there and on Wakde Island. From 25th to 29th May, TF74 was absent from Humboldt Bay covering the landings on Biak. *Warramunga*'s radar proved so effective that it even picked up a waterlogged tree floating off the coast.

The Japanese Navy reacted to this latest landing – the Allies were getting close to the Philippines. Rumours of a Japanese force approaching Biak sent TF74 to sea on 3/4th June. No Japanese ships were sighted although divebombers attacked at 1730 on 4th June, damaging the cruisers *Nashville* and *Phoenix*. TF74 did not stay long at Humboldt Bay after returning there to fuel on the 6th. Japanese destroyers were definitely trying to take reinforcements to Biak and on the 8/9th TF74 intercepted

them between Mapia and Biak Islands. Positioned at the stern of the force *Warramunga* and *Arunta* took no part in the action which developed. While the US destroyers pursued the Japanese, the two Australian Tribals were ordered to hunt for any cast-off barges. *Arunta* found and sank one.

TF74 was based at Manus until 24th June. Sailing on that day, they met the Noemfoor assault convoy off Biak on 1st July and at 0430 the next morning began bombarding Kamiri airstrip and the surrounding caves. *Arunta* contributed 545 4.7in shells and *Warramunga* 493. Just over four hours later TF74's mission had been fulfilled and they were on their way back to Hollandia for training and exercises.

These evolutions were disturbed on 12th July when they were sent to Aitape. The next day they began a series of bombardments against a desperate Japanese counter-attack from Wewak. The targets were often three or four miles inland and were then usually marked by RAAF spotter planes. At night the destroyers worked with PT-boats, searching for barges and trucks as far east as Karawop.

Warramunga, PT144 and PT149 had a successful night on the 19/20th when they attacked Japanese barges at the mouth of a river. The PT-boats hit two barges but were driven off by shore batteries. These guns were silenced by *Warramunga*, who then fired starshell to illuminate the barges. They could not be seen but 15 minutes later, *Warramunga*'s radar guided the PTs onto three barges. They sank two and on the next pass *Warramunga*'s starshell illuminated the third. She was already beached and the PTs finished her off, while *Warramunga* shelled some light guns ashore.

For the most part however, these patrols seemed to have little visible result, nor was there much return fire from the enemy.

On 22nd July *Australia* and *Warramunga* were withdrawn for refit at Sydney. *Arunta* and the rest of TF74 soon departed to cover the landings at Sansapor on the Vogelkop Peninsula of New Guinea. The assault was delivered on 30th July and on 3rd August *Arunta* was making for Sydney, docking, and leave.

The Australian ships of TF74 had finished refitting by the end of August and they arrived at Milne Bay for General MacArthur's long-promised return to the Philippines. As an initial step TF74 left Humboldt Bay escorting a South-West Pacific force which went ashore on the island of Morotai, 300 miles south of the Philippines, on 15th September. *Arunta* and *Warramunga* were mainly employed in screening *Australia* and *Shropshire* bombarding Cape Gila. *Warramunga*'s gunfire did drive Japanese barge No. 314 ashore and destroyed another, while *Arunta* embarked a newsreel cameraman to cover the landings.

After spending several days at Mios Woendi, TF74 headed for Manus. They were there from 29th September to 1st October, replenishing and exercising with Desron 24 (*Hutchins*, *Bache*, *Beale*, *Daly*, *Arunta*, *Warramunga* and *Killen*) and the Close Cover Group (*Phoenix*, *Boise*, *Australia* and *Shropshire*).

On Friday the 13th October, they sailed from Hollandia escorting 26 LSTs of the Leyte Northern Attack Force. Convoy speed during the 1,250-mile passage was 9 knots, and a light following wind of about 9 knots made the heat almost unbear-

able. Each ship, enveloped in a near-invisible miasma of funnel exhaust, kept a constant watch for air and submarine attack which never came. Daily the destroyers topped up their tanks from the cruisers. Commander MacKinnon fell ill and had to be relieved as captain of *Warramunga* by Lieutenant-Commander Alliston from *Shropshire*.

At 0030 on 20th October, they passed Point Fin, an imaginary position at the entrance to Leyte Gulf through which all the Central Pacific and South-West Pacific ships had to be funnelled. These waters were mined, and although minesweepers and bombardment ships had been in the area since the 17th, some ships still picked up mines in their paravane sweeps.

By 0900 all transports of the Northern Attack Force were in position in San Pedro Bay and the bombardment reached its climax. *Arunta* and *Warramunga* shelled gun emplacements on a hill south of Tanaunan and then the bombardment lifted inland as landing craft headed for the shore at 0945. The two Tribals later bombarded the mouth of the River Palo and then patrolled off Samar Island for most of the day. *Arunta* shot down a Japanese bomber and picked up the pilot's body.

In the evening *Warramunga* and *Arunta* helped lay a smoke screen to cover the transports while the escorts' guns outside the screen dealt with air attacks during the night. The screen was not always effective, while bad fire discipline caused some damage to Allied ships and aircraft – recurrent problems in anchorages now being swept by the Divine Wind. *Australia* was one of the first ships to be hit by a Kamikaze, at dawn on 21st October. She and *Honolulu*, who had also been damaged, left for Manus via the Palaus escorted by *Warramunga* and *Richard P. Leary*. This little group arrived at Manus on the 27th and the destroyers left to return to the Philippines the next day. *Warramunga* thus missed the biggest naval battle of all time.

During the first few days of her absence there were more air attacks on the ships in Leyte Gulf, but they did little damage, especially later on when frequent showers afforded additional protection. Then on 24th October, reports began to come in from US submarines and aircraft attacking powerful Japanese forces heading towards the Philippines. The greatest danger to Leyte Gulf seemed to be coming via the Mindanao Sea. Desron 24 was therefore ordered to assist in the defence of Surigao Strait. After several days' bombardment duty they only had 20% of their shells left and of course, no replacement torpedoes on board. But they were not alone; Surigao Strait held a further 22 destroyers and 39 PT-boats, while eight cruisers backed by six battleships were ready to cross the T of the Japanese line of advance. The entire force was commanded by Rear-Admiral Oldendorf.

At 0302 on the 25th Desron 24 was heading south towards the sound of battle as Vice-Admiral Nishimura forced his way through the first American attacks. *Arunta*, *Killen* and *Beale* were in one division with *Hutchins*, *Daly* and *Bache* in the other. At 0317 the destroyer *Yamagumo* was hit by a torpedo fired by another destroyer squadron, and for the next ten minutes her flames lit up her consorts, the battleships *Fuso* and *Yamashiro*, the cruiser *Mogami* and the destroyers *Asagumo* and *Shigure*. *Arunta* led her division in to 6,500 yards and fired her four torpedoes at *Shigure*. All

missed (*Shigure* was the only ship of the force to escape that night) but *Yamashiro* was hit and temporarily slowed by one of *Killen*'s five torpedoes. As soon as *Beale* had fired her five torpedoes – without result – the division turned north and cleared the area so that other US ships could open fire.

By 0440, Desron 24 was covering the starboard side of the US cruisers as they pursued those Japanese vessels still afloat and retreating back down Surigao Strait. Then, for about an hour, the cruisers reformed to screen the battleships, waiting while the destroyers finished off crippled warships and checked the possibility of a torpedo ambush from Vice-Admiral Shima's force. However, he had been turned back by PT-boat torpedoes and by the disastrous news from *Shigure*. The destroyers also tried to pick up survivors, but the Japanese in the water refused to take *Arunta*'s lifelines and drowned.

The pursuit of the Japanese began again, but at 0732 all Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's ships were recalled northwards at high speed. Vice-Admiral Kurita's powerful squadron had emerged from San Bernardino Strait and was annihilating the small carriers charged with supporting the troops ashore on Leyte. At 0850, however, Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's ships were ordered first to stand off Hibusan Island, then to stand down from surface-action stations. The Japanese had for some reason turned back when only 45 miles from the Leyte beachhead.

But there could be no relaxation at Leyte, Ormoc Bay and Mindoro in the last months of 1944. Organised Kamikaze attacks were now coming in almost continuously, almost every day. The destroyers were taken off anti-submarine patrol so that their fire could augment the anti-aircraft screen around the battleships, cruisers and carriers, themselves desperately trying to kill the suiciders before they struck the transports upon whom the troops ashore depended. There was little room to manoeuvre and the sky, when not overcast with heavy rain, became black with the smoke from shell-bursts, exploding aircraft and blazing ships. Food was scarce, especially fresh vegetables, and a case of scurvy was diagnosed aboard *Arunta*. Food improved a little at Christmas, but not for personnel in the forward areas, and even at Manus it was not considered good.

On New Year's Day 1945, *Arunta* and *Warramunga* left Manus bound for Luzon as part of the Lingayen Gulf assault force. Kamikaze attacks developed as they headed through the Sulu Sea and the carrier *Ommaney Bay* was sunk.

At 0450 on 5th January, two Kamikazes broke through the combat air patrol 100 miles off Manila Bay. A Mitsubishi A6M Zero with a 250lb bomb headed straight for *Arunta*'s bridge. Commander Buchanan went hard a'starboard and 'thanks to the extreme manoeuvring ability of the Tribal-class destroyer', the Zero skimmed the port side of the bridge and hit the sea alongside the gearing-room. The explosion sent fragments flying through *Arunta*'s side to sever electrical leads to the steering motors. Not daring to stop, Commander Buchanan continued to circle until the attack was over. Two men had been killed and five wounded. It took five hours to repair *Arunta*'s damage, lying stopped while the destroyer *Ingraham* circled her. Then they caught up the main body of the fleet at 25 knots.

Fourteen more Kamikazes had broken through and several more ships had been damaged including *Australia*. The Kamikazes reached a new frenzy on the 6th as the force entered Lingayen Gulf. Battleships, cruisers, destroyers, transports, mine-layers and minesweepers were hit, grazed, nearmissed and hit again. *Arunta*, *Bennion*, a radar guardship and the Australian sloop *Warrego* drove off suicide attacks on minesweepers trying to clear the approaches to the beaches.

At 1219 the old destroyer-transport *Brooks* was hit amidships by one Kamikaze which knocked down one funnel and blasted a hole in the deck. Flaming petrol blazed up amidships and started another fire just abaft the bridge near the 3in magazine. Wreckage hung over the side and prevented *Warramunga* from coming alongside. The only point of contact was between the fo'c'sles and here the wounded were transferred while hoses played on the flames farther aft. By 1348 the fires were out and two minutes later *Warramunga* had taken *Brooks* in tow. *Warrego* and the frigate *Gascoyne* screened the two ships as they headed seawards for the night.

At dawn the tow parted, but *Gascoyne* managed to get a wire aboard just as the battlefleet loomed up, steaming in to bombard the beaches. *Warramunga*'s little group had enough problems and it was the big ships that had to alter course. *Brooks* was towed to Santiago Island where *Warramunga* took off 132 of her crew and a dog, and put them aboard the battleship *Pennsylvania*, then shelling the beaches. The rest of *Brooks*' crew stayed aboard her, but their struggle had been in vain. The old ship was declared beyond repair and was eventually scrapped.

US troops began landing in Lingayen Gulf on the 9th. After both Tribals had taken part in the final bombardments, *Arunta* helped escort a convoy of empty transports and Kamikazied warships which returned to Leyte Gulf, arriving on the 12th. Repair crews there made good *Arunta*'s own Kamikaze damage and she then embarked Commodore Farncomb from *Australia* – the cruiser was now right out of the fight – to transfer him to *Shropshire* at Lingayen Gulf on the 22nd. Suicide attacks were not so frequent now (the Japanese had almost run out of aircraft in the Philippines) but smokescreens were still maintained at night, and anti-aircraft watch was unceasing.

On 13th February, *Arunta* and *Warramunga* joined a fire support group being held in reserve for the bombardment of Corregidor during the preliminary minesweeping operations in Manila Bay. Manila itself and the Bataan Peninsula had already been taken, and on the 16th airborne and amphibious troops landed on Corregidor. The Tribals were no longer needed in Manila Bay. After spending nine days in Lingayen Gulf, they left for Leyte on the 26th. On 16th March *Arunta* and *Shropshire* arrived at Sydney for a much-welcome leave and refit.

Warramunga meanwhile remained in the forward area helping to clear the Central and Southern Philippines. On 26th March she was in the support group covering the landing on Cebu, although she did not take part in the bombardment, remaining on patrol offshore.

A month later *Hobart* and *Warramunga*, having replenished at Subic Bay were passing through the Sibutu Passage with the rest of the Tarakan assault force, when

they encountered a number of Japanese on rafts. They were evidently trying to reach Borneo from islands offshore. Five on one raft surrendered. All the rest either committed suicide or were killed. The force arrived off Tarakan the next day and spent several days carrying out bombardments to cover the vital minesweeping operations.

While shelling Sadau Island during the preliminary landing there on 30th April, the destroyer *Jenkins* struck a mine and stopped. *Warramunga* tried to take her in tow but she later got going again under her own steam. 1st May saw the Tarakan landing itself. After completing the bombardment mission, *Hobart* and *Warramunga* headed for Hollandia. Here *Warramunga* and *Arunta* were together again.

On 10th and 11th May they covered the Dove Bay landing along the New Guinea coast from Wewak. This 'mopping-up' of Japanese bases was just as savage as earlier and more famous operations. From now on the Australian forces were mainly engaged in this sort of task. On the 12th *Warramunga* parted company at Hollandia; it was her turn for Sydney leave.

Arunta took part in amphibious rehearsals at Morotai at the end of May and left there with the Brunei attack force on 5th June. The 9th and 10th saw the bombardment force off Muara Island. A solitary Kawasaki Ki45 Nick made a half-hearted attack and fled. Some targets on Labuan were shelled and that island was then occupied. After ammunitioning at Tawitawi *Shropshire*, *Hobart* and *Arunta* bombarded Lutong and Miri, covering the capture of the Brunei oilfields.

There were more rehearsals and then it was the turn of Balikpapan in south-east Borneo. Shore positions were bombarded from 27th June until the landing on 1st July and then *Arunta* returned to Tawitawi. She had to stay there several days waiting for stocks of 4.7in ammunition to be built up that far forward. On the 11th *Arunta* sailed for Sydney. Her war was over.

Arunta now underwent a major refit. A lattice foremast replaced the tripod, the mainmast and searchlight platform were removed altogether and improved radar installed. Her light AA armament included six single 40mm guns and her complement numbered 250. Her standard and full load displacements rose to 1,970 tons and 2,675 tons respectively. Her maximum full load draught was 15½ft.

From 1945 to 1949, *Arunta* led an unspectacular life of patrols, exercises, cruises, and refits in Australian, Japanese and Pacific waters. She spent the period from July 1950 to May 1953 being reconstructed as an anti-submarine destroyer, so she did not participate actively in Korean operations. Her deckhouse was extended aft and a 3-barrelled squid depth-charge mortar replaced 'Y' mounting. Her gun armament was as follows: four 4.7in LA/HA (2× 2), two 4in AA (1× 2), eight 40mm AA (1× 2, 6× 1). 293 men were now needed to run the ship and her standard displacement rose to 2,200 tons (2,800 tons full load). *Arunta*'s speed, estimated after the previous refit as 34 knots, now fell to 32 knots. *Arunta* spent four active but peaceful years in the RAN until she was laid up in reserve in 1957. Several times further reconstruction was proposed, but nothing came of it and eventually she was sold for scrap to the China Steel Corporation of Taipei on Taiwan.

On 13th February 1969 she left Sydney towed by the Japanese tug *Toko Maru*. 60

miles south-east of Broken Bay, *Arunta*, veteran of almost every South-West Pacific battle, developed a severe list and sank.

Commanding Officers

Cdr J. C. Morrow, DSO, RAN 2nd March 1942 – 26th August 1943.
Cdr A. E. Buchanan, RAN 27th August 1943 – 18th August 1945.
Cdr G. G. O. Gatacre, DSC, RAN 19th August 1945 – 14th October 1947.
Cdr F. N. Cook, DSC, RAN 15th October 1947 – 20th February 1949.
Lt-Cdr J. H. Dowson, RAN 21st February 1949 – 24th March 1949.
Lt-Cdr A. H. Green, DSC, RAN 25th March 1949 – 14th May 1950.
Cdr J. M. Ramsay, RAN November 1952 – 14th May 1953.
Cdr W. J. Dovers, DSC, RAN 15th May 1953 – 12th December 1954.
Cdr W. K. Tapp, RAN 13th December 1954 – 1957.

Pennant Numbers

I30 February 1942 – April 1953
D130 May 1953 – February 1969

HMS Ashanti

First of name

Builders: William Denny, Dumbarton
Engined by: William Denny, Dumbarton
Ordered: June 1936
Laid Down: 23rd November 1936
Launched: 5th November 1937 (by Lady Shuckburgh)
Commissioned: 21st December 1938

EVERY TRIBAL was supposed to visit the people for whom she had been named. If this suggestion had been carried out it would have involved a very long voyage for *Maori*, an impossible task for *Gurkha* and diplomatic problems for *Cossack* and *Tartar*. There were indeed close links between the Tribals and their peoples who presented trophies and comforts to their ships, but *Ashanti* was the only Tribal to make a special journey to her namesakes.

Ashanti arrived at Takoradi on 27th February 1939. Her completion had been held up by delays in the delivery of her gun mountings (this happened to several of the Tribals) and she had run some of her trials without them as early as August 1938. After the usual working-up at Portland, *Ashanti* went out to Gibraltar in company with *Eskimo*. She then proceeded alone to Freetown and the Gold Coast.

A party of about 80 officers and men travelled to Kumasi and at 0900 on 1st March 1939, the Governor of the Gold Coast (Sir Arnold Hodson) held a durbar in Prince of Wales Park. During this ceremony, a silver bell and a gold shield were presented by the Asantehene (Chief Prempeh II) and the people of Ashanti. The latter piece of plate had been made by a local goldsmith from gold from the mines of Ashanti. It was cast in the form of an Ashanti shield with crossed weapons (symbolic of protection) with the emblem and motto of the Ashanti. The Asantehene was most emphatic that the trophies had been presented to *HMS Ashanti* and must stay with her in peace and war, regardless of what might befall the ship.

When she was later opened to visitors at Takoradi, Ashanti witchdoctors presented emblems of good fortune to her and placed their spells of valour and survival upon the destroyer.

Ashanti stayed at Takoradi for about a week and then returned via Freetown to Gibraltar arriving at the tail-end of the Home and Mediterranean combined fleet exercises. *Somali*, *Ashanti* and *Eskimo* returned with the Home Fleet to give Easter leave at UK ports, *Ashanti* and *Eskimo* being at Chatham for the rest of April.

On 3rd May, *Somali* took *Eskimo*, *Matabele* and *Ashanti* from Portland (where they had been carrying out exercises) to Cherbourg for a goodwill visit. A French ship or naval unit acted as host to each of the British destroyers. There were luncheon

parties, cocktail parties, dances, receptions, excursions and sports (football, pulling races, riding, fishing, tennis and golf). Parties of French and British sailors were shown over each other's ships. These social and professional meetings encouraged all ranks to get to know their opposite numbers. With war looming it seemed likely that British and French destroyers would be working together very closely. It was important that they be friends, not just allies.

In spite of this crowded programme, the Tribals still found time to carry out some harbour exercises before they left Cherbourg on the 8th. They met the other four ships of the flotilla who had been escorting the liner *Empress of Australia* down-Channel at the beginning of King George VI's and Queen Elizabeth's tour of Canada. Now the flotilla was together for the first time and *Somali*, *Ashanti*, *Mashona*, *Eskimo*, *Tartar*, *Matabele*, *Bedouin* and *Punjabi* practised night exercises while returning to Portland.

May was not a propitious month for the flotilla. There was a gun accident aboard *Eskimo* and a torpedo struck one of *Ashanti*'s boats. It had been fired from the torpedo trials establishment, ran wild and surfaced directly under the boat, crashing through the stern and throwing one man overboard. He was picked up again and nobody was hurt. The boat limped back with the dummy warhead still stuck through its bottom and the rest of the torpedo hanging below.

June opened with a disaster of national proportions. On Thursday, 1st June, officers and libertymen had gone ashore and were scattered throughout Weymouth and Portland. At 2005 the 6th DF was ordered to raise steam for full speed and proceed with all despatch to a position in the Irish Sea. The submarine *Thetis* had failed to surface during trials.

Notices were flashed on cinema screens and all officers and libertymen were recalled. By 2145 *Somali*, *Mashona*, *Eskimo*, *Tartar*, *Matabele*, *Bedouin* and *Punjabi* were steaming out of Portland. *Ashanti* waited behind to collect all the personnel still left ashore – a task which provided the only humour in a very grim business. Her passengers included five coxswains, which to the delight of the rest of the crew deflated the old boast of coxswains that they were indispensable.

Meanwhile the rest of the flotilla were racing down-Channel, round Land's End and up through the Irish Sea. All were soon doing over 30 knots – they had reached this from cold boilers in just over two hours, in some cases under the direction of the senior engine-room rating.

At 0754 on the 2nd, the destroyer *Brazen* located *Thetis*' stern sticking up 18ft out of the water, 14 miles off Great Orme's Head. The 6th DF arrived at 1045. Captain Nicholson of *Somali* was the senior officer and he immediately took overall charge of operations. Four men had escaped using DSEA sets, but the other 99 had now been in *Thetis* for 21 hours. The salvage vessel *Vigilant* and the tug *Grebecock* had arrived. A doctor was flown out from Holyhead in a seaplane as both the flotilla's doctors were in *Ashanti*. *Bedouin* went into Liverpool to collect another doctor and Rear-Admiral Watson (Flag-Officer Submarines). She was accompanied by *Matabele* who acted as a radio link ship.

Meanwhile *Somali*, *Mashona*, *Eskimo*, *Tartar* and *Punjabi* organised sick-bay parties,

food and warm clothing, and lowered boats to pick up survivors who would be coming to the surface at any minute. This hope was soon dispelled. Divers were sent down but were unable to work in the strong current. A manhole cover was removed from the protruding stern, but it only gave access to the rudder compartment. *Vigilant* passed a wire around the submarine's stern, but the tidal current slewed round and started to push her underwater instead of lifting her. *Somali* closed *Vigilant* to pass an electric drill to start cutting a hole in the sterm, but the tug *Crosby* arrived with proper oxy-acetylene gear. Now there was a danger that if a hole was cut it would be flooded by the rising tide, but before an attempt could be made, *Vigilant*'s wire parted and the stern of the submarine slowly disappeared beneath the surface.

That was the end of hope. More ships came and went with doctors, representatives, officers, divers, experts, equipment, camels – but there was little they could do. *Bedouin* came out with Rear-Admiral Watson. *Eskimo* took two civilian doctors and one of the *Thetis* survivors from *Somali*'s sick bay to Liverpool, passing *Matabele* bringing out divers and salvage experts. At 2215 *Ashanti* arrived from Portland.

That night *Tartar, Matabele, Bedouin* and *Punjabi* were sent to the Clyde to refuel and on the morning of the 3rd *Ashanti* was sent into Liverpool to obtain petrol and provisions (including 13½cwt of bread) for the other ships. She waited there for the Controller, Rear-Admiral Fraser, and took him out. Admiral Sir Martin Dunbar-Nasmith (C-in-C Plymouth) had arrived by flying boat and a full conference was held aboard *Somali* lasting until 0300 on the 4th. Later that morning, a Sunday, a short memorial service was held and then the flotilla began, sadly, to disperse. *Eskimo* was sent to search, unsuccessfully, for an aircraft reported down in the sea off Donaghadee, Ireland. *Mashona* and *Ashanti* sailed later. At 2130 *Somali* steamed away from the melancholy scene.

The flotilla reformed off Rothesay and proceeded northabout to Rosyth where the Home Fleet was gathering for the forthcoming visit of the French fleet. These activities, and exercises here and at Portland, occupied them for the rest of the month – some destroyers taking pressmen to sea to cover the exercises and popularise the work of the Navy.

The international situation was now so critical that the usual Navy Weeks and At Homes were postponed indefinitely and all ships began summer leave early, on 27th June. On 30th July they began leaving their home ports and on 1st August the 6th DF reassembled with the Home Fleet. Working from Invergordon, Scapa Flow and the Shetlands, they began a comprehensive series of exercises testing the efficacy of Northern Patrols which prevented blockade runners reaching Germany, and raiders breaking out. During the post-mortem conference it became apparent that the warship challenged without reply was not one of the RN vessels taking part in the exercise. Later events were to show that it was a German raider on her way to her war station in the Atlantic.

When war began, the 6th DF was cruising with the Home Fleet and French ships in the North Atlantic. Only *Bedouin* was temporarily absent, repairing a machinery defect at Scapa, but as wartime patrols and alarms developed the flotilla saw less and

less of each other. There were submarine hunts aplenty. Merchant ships reported U-boats off Iceland, lighthouse keepers saw periscopes off Muckle Flugga and the destroyers would be sent racing out to search the area hours, even days, later. Such high-speed, unproductive work soon told on machinery and *Ashanti* was one of the first to develop turbinitis. She spent nearly all September 1939 having new blades fitted.

After *Royal Oak* had been torpedoed and sunk on 14th October, *Somali* and *Mashona* got an asdic echo right in the middle of the Flow itself. They lost it, found it again and depth-charged it. The echo stayed there and was still being investigated after the Germans had announced U-47's safe return. On 17th October it was decided to send a diver down to see what was causing the echo. At 1030 *Somali*, *Ashanti* and *Eskimo* were using asdic to conn the diving boat into position when two German bombers suddenly came in from the west. *Eskimo*'s 2pdr guns promptly hit one that crashed on Hoy and burst into flames. The other broke away, but a third came past very low. *Somali* and *Ashanti* opened fire and apparently missed astern, but something must have hit it as the aircraft disappeared and apparently crashed beyond South Ronaldsay. The old battleship *Iron Duke* had been the chief German target. Two nearmisses had blown in her side and she had to be beached while *Eskimo* provided electric-power for the dead ship. *Iron Duke* later continued as a base and accommodation ship. Another four aircraft appeared in the afternoon, one bomb throwing a large cod onto *Ashanti*'s fo'c'sle, but that was all.

The anti-submarine search in the Flow went on until the 22nd, when the destroyers were told to hold themselves in readiness for convoy escort. *Somali*, *Ashanti*, *Tartar* and *Fame* proceeded via Sullum Voe to meet their convoy off Norway. On the way south *Fame* was detached with two ships for the Atlantic and then on the 29/30th *Somali* got a contact. It was depth-charged, passed under the convoy, picked up again and attacked again. *Tartar* stayed behind for a while and then left to catch up *Ashanti* and the convoy. Another two patterns of depth-charges were rewarded with a widening slick of diesel oil. The object showed up clearly on the echo sounder and another pattern was dropped. At dawn the last five charges went down on the motionless contact and each time more oil appeared. *Fame* arrived to stand guard and the contact was still seeping oil when the four destroyers passed it again with their next Norwegian convoy. They were certain it was a U-boat, but it was not confirmed. Perhaps it was the wreck of a First World War U-boat – several had been sunk in that area.

On 15th November *Somali*, *Mashona*, *Ashanti* and *Bedouin* escorted *Nelson* and *Rodney* to the Clyde, like Loch Ewe one of the temporary Home Fleet bases pending the strengthening of Scapa Flow's defences. The destroyers went on to Belfast, being ordered to escort two dummy battleships to Scapa Flow. Instead three destroyers were immediately sent out to look for a reported U-boat a hundred miles away. Perhaps predictably, it was not there when they arrived, so back they went to Belfast again, only to be alerted by a signal from the armed merchant cruiser *Rawalpindi*. *Nelson* and *Rodney* and their escorting destroyers raced off to try to intercept *Scharnhorst* and

Gneisenau off Iceland. The force was soon joined by *Bedouin* and other destroyers who had been taking the dummy battleships to Scapa Flow. The weather was appalling and the destroyers could not keep up with the big ships. Some suffered weather damage and had to turn back. The fruitless operation was eventually called off and the ships returned wearily to port, to fuel, to dash off again and to return again.

12th December found the 6th DF gathered at Greenock with other destroyers and some of the Home Fleet capital ships. The force sailed at 1330 to meet the first Canadian troop convoy consisting of *Aquitania*, *Empress of Britain*, *Empress of Australia*, *Duchess of Richmond* and *Monarch of Bermuda*. Bad weather prevented sightings being taken, so that convoy and escort missed each other for a while but the liners were soon located and escorted into the Clyde where the 6th DF were going to spend Christmas.

Christmas Day began pleasantly enough, but in the afternoon sailing orders came through. There was no time to sort out which libertymen belonged to which ship. The requisite numbers of bodies were put aboard each Tribal and the destroyers sailed that evening with full complements. 'Foreign' personnel were exchanged by boat later. Another Canadian contingent was entering the Western Approaches and on this occasion the destroyers met them first time. They arrived back at Greenock on 30th December.

Ashanti began 1940 with more anti-submarine patrols and escort duties – convoys and capital ships. Seawater began seeping into her boiler feedwater tanks, a defect which soon results in the corrosion and disintegration of boiler tubes. From time to time for the rest of her life *Ashanti* had to be drydocked for the double-bottom plating under the machinery spaces to be caulked and cemented. She completed such a refit (which included degaussing) at Cowes on 21st March and then returned to the Home Fleet.

Ashanti's part in the Norwegian campaign began on 9th April when she, *Maori* and *Fortune* escorted *Warspite* to join the C-in-C. She shared in their fruitless sweep in the North Sea and in the accompanying air attacks.

After returning to Scapa, *Ashanti* joined the cruisers *Calcutta*, *Effingham* and *York* off Alesund to intercept German destroyers believed to be heading for Trondheim with troops and supplies. At dawn action stations on the 17th a submarine was sighted and a pattern of depth-charges was dropped just as *Ashanti* went hard a'port to avoid two torpedoes. The submarine broke surface, all guns were trained on her, the director-layer took his finger off the trigger and reported "It's one of ours." The pennant number T38 was visible on her conning-tower. She was *Taku*, charged with a similar mission as *Ashanti*. It had been a lucky escape for both vessels.

To commemorate the event, Commander Davis had a battle-scroll fixed on the bridge inscribed with Jack Warner's catchphrase, "Mind my bike. 17th April 1940."

After visiting Andalsnes to land seamen and pick up two intelligence officers, *Ashanti* arrived back at Scapa Flow in time to join *Nubian*, *Sikh* and *Mohawk* in an expedition to Trondheim itself. At one time it had been suggested that Allied troops be put ashore right in Trondheimsfiord. This idea had been shelved but there were reports

that German destroyers were lurking there. While *Sikh* and *Mohawk* patrolled the mouth of the fiord, *Ashanti* and *Nubian* went into Kraakvaagsfiord on 26th April. Nothing was seen, but the following day a German bomber dropped nine bombs around the two ships. Understandably, the Luftwaffe now took exception to four strange destroyers so close to their airfield. All four were attacked, almost a hundred bombs falling close to *Nubian* and *Ashanti*. One nearmiss scraped *Ashanti*'s side and exploded underneath her. The main turbo-generator was blown off its bedplate and all electricity failed. Steering by hand from the tiller-flat, *Ashanti* zigzagged out of the fiord at 26 knots. On the way damage control shored up the generator-bed and electrical power was restored. The high-speed manoeuvring had used up a lot of fuel oil which was now getting short. It was so low in fact, that when three trawlers were sighted and the destroyers heeled over to intercept, *Ashanti*'s boilers lost suction. There was just enough left to reach Scapa on 29th April. After transferring her three casualties and fuelling, *Ashanti* went to Dundee for repairs. The bomb damage had aggravated her double-bottom trouble.

Repairs took several weeks but on 23rd May, *Ashanti* was back at Scapa Flow. Early June saw a series of complicated movements ensuring the safe return of troop convoys from Narvik to the UK. On the 5th, *Repulse*, *Newcastle*, *Sussex*, *Maori*, *Forester* and *Foxhound*, plus *Renown*, *Zulu* and *Kelvin*, left Scapa Flow to intercept German warships reported to be heading for Icelandic waters. The next day *Valiant*, *Tartar*, *Mashona*, *Bedouin* and *Ashanti* sailed for Norwegian waters. At 0100 on the 8th, *Valiant*'s group met the first convoy from Narvik. They were escorted to the Faeroes and sent on to the Clyde, while *Valiant* and her destroyers returned to the next convoy. That day there were garbled signals about *Glorious*' sinking so *Renown*'s force was ordered back to Scapa while the *Repulse* group remained on patrol off Iceland. At 0900 on 9th June *Valiant* met the hospital ship *Atlantis*, bearing the news that *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were at sea. The hunt lasted three days with no result, except another air attack.

For most of June, July, August and September, *Ashanti* took part in fleet escort duties, anti-submarine patrols in the Atlantic and North Sea and generally just waiting for the invasion.

On 24th September, *Ashanti* and *Bedouin* were ordered to search the Dogger Bank for five Blenheim airmen adrift in a rubber dinghy. The search went on for two days without success although *Bedouin* sighted something else – the Norwegian yacht *Haabet*. The three Norwegians in her had escaped from Oslo several days before. They seemed to be quite happy, but the Admiralty regarded them with some suspicion, so *Bedouin* was ordered to pick them up. The yacht was swept away from its davits and lost during the night. Later in the war, the Norwegians returned to Norway as resistance workers.

The two destroyers had almost returned to Rosyth, when more news about the rubber dinghy was received. They used MF/DF to home on two circling aircraft. *Bedouin* picked up the rubber dinghy and the only man now alive.

During this period the Germans began running convoys up and down the

Norwegian coast. They had air cover during the day but were weakly defended at night. A trap was therefore planned for them. On 13th October, such a convoy was sighted by Coastal Command and that day Captain Vian in *Cossack* led *Ashanti*, *Sikh* and *Maori* out of Rosyth. *Zulu* should have accompanied them, but as the ships were passing under the Forth Bridge, there was a heavy underwater explosion. *Zulu* pulled out of line and stopped. It looked as though one of the leading destroyers had accidentally dropped a depth-charge, but the damage was later found to have been caused by one of the first acoustic mines.

About midnight, the four destroyers sighted the German convoy off Egersund. *Cossack* and *Ashanti* fired 4.7in guns and torpedoes at the merchantmen and 2pdr guns at the escorts. Twice the Tribals reversed course and swept past as the convoy tried to run inshore under cover of the coastal batteries. Unfortunately *Maori* and *Sikh* held their fire hoping for better targets during the proposed sweep north and south of Egersund later that night. Still, two merchantmen had been torpedoed, a tanker was on fire and one of the escorts damaged, while the fifth ship (a coaster or small escort) had been hit and had disappeared in the smoke. The convoy had ceased to exist, although later evidence proved that only two ships (including *Genua* of 1,949 tons) had actually sunk. One shell hit *Cossack* right in the stern, slightly damaging the steering-gear compartment and giving the watchkeeper several cuts. There were no other casualties or damage in the British ships. No publicity was given to this raid as the Admiralty hoped to repeat it. It resulted in the introduction of flashless cordite in destroyers as well as the use of starshell instead of searchlights to illuminate the enemy without giving away one's own position.

By 16th October the new battleship *King George V* was nearing completion at Vickers-Armstrong's yard on the Tyne. Such a valuable but raw unit needed a powerful escort of cruisers and destroyers to take her up the coast to Scapa Flow. Six destroyers *Fame*, *Ashanti*, *Maori*, *Sikh*, *Electra* and *Brilliant* were ordered to carry out a high-speed run through the channel leading to the Tyne. These ships should thus produce enough magnetic and acoustic disturbance to simulate a battleship's passage and so detonate any mines of that nature in the channel. Their own speed should carry the destroyers safely away from the explosion. (The scientific sweeping of ground mines was still in its early stages.) It was vital that the Germans should not learn of the battleship's move and security was so tight that the destroyers had not been told the purpose of their sweep, nor the ship they were supposed to escort. Worse still, a navigational buoy had been moved and the requisite chart corrections were lacking.

At 0400, at almost full speed in murky drizzle, *Fame* ran straight onto the beach at Whitburn Rifle Range. *Ashanti* was right astern, going full speed astern and hard a'port. For a moment a rumble through the ship's hull sounded like depth-charges being dropped astern, then *Ashanti* still doing 7 knots struck *Fame* a glancing blow on her port quarter and ended up alongside. The shock shattered oil fuel pipes in both ships' boiler rooms and *Fame* caught fire. *Maori*, next astern, could not stop before touching the bottom but just managed to get off with the loss of her asdic

dome. The others stopped in time, but they still had no idea why they were there.

Hearing all the commotion the defence post ashore thought the invasion had started and raised the alarm, but daylight showed the destroyers so high and dry they could be walked round at low tide. Sunderland Fire Brigade manhandled their pumps and equipment over the rocks to put out *Fame*'s fire, while her crew emptied her magazines.

Rising tides found them still held fast by the bows. The swell lifted and swung their free sterns, dropping them onto the rocks and crumpling the bottom plating. In spite of collision mats and rubbers, *Ashanti*'s bow twisted and chafed through *Fame*'s side. One by one aerials and mast stays snapped. Damage control training in *Ashanti* included being sent down into the boiler rooms in a breathing-mask with the eye-pieces blacked out, to shut down the boilers. Now such exercises paid off as store rooms were emptied and equipment jettisoned. Oil fuel was everywhere. Some people were so immersed in it that for the rest of their service days they seemed to exude fuel oil whenever they perspired.

Vickers-Armstrong sent their gangs with sheer legs and tackle to strip and lift out all armament, while the destroyer crews were accommodated in the rifle range huts ashore. Greenwall & Co. patched and welded and sealed off what they could during the brief hours of low tide and after a fortnight *Ashanti* (who had priority treatment) was refloated and taken to Sunderland. Greenwalls made her more sea-worthy for the longer tow to Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson at Wallsend on Tyne for complete rebuilding. *Fame* also lived to run again, but the affair was a closely-kept secret. *King George V*, meanwhile, slipped up the coast virtually unescorted.

Beginning 9th November the whole of *Ashanti*'s bottom outer plating and most of the starboard side was rebuilt. Extra supports and stiffening were worked in. 'A' brackets, propellers and rudder were renewed. The engines, No. 2 and 3 boilers had to be taken out and No. 1 boiler lifted up to enable this work to be carried out. At the same time a twin 4in AA replaced 'X' 4.7in mounting and 20mm positions were constructed, although the guns themselves were not installed until after the refit. The after funnel was cut down and the mainmast removed to give better AA fire and provide a lower silhouette for night surface action. Types 275 and 286PQ radar and other gadgets were installed. A new crew arrived, mainly survivors from *Mashona*.

On a paper appreciation, *Ashanti* was a newer, better ship, but the damage had destroyed the homogeneity of her structure, which repairs could not recreate. The winter of 1940/41 was also a difficult period for the nation; the repair of one destroyer was not the most pressing priority just then. One item of gunnery equipment was destroyed by bombing before it reached the Tyne. The replacement proved to have been discarded by Whale Island as no longer fit even for drill purposes. Rain affected exposed steam pipes, causing corrosion which could never quite be eradicated. Every fortnight from May onwards, a new commissioning date was set only to be postponed

for another fortnight as a fresh defect developed or some piece of equipment failed to arrive.

At last *Ashanti* left Wallsend at the end of August 1941, ready for action lest a similar fate befall her as happened to the fighter catapult ship *Patia*, bombed when leaving the Tyne after her conversion. But just off the coast a terrible vibration set in at 15 knots – the starboard shaft was out of alignment. Commander Onslow was determined to take his ship to war and not back to dock. *Ashanti* limped up the coast at 7 knots to dock at Rosyth where the shaft was repaired – a defect that required further attention from time to time. *Ashanti* had rejoined the fleet.

Ashanti's working-up at Scapa Flow shaded imperceptibly into her service with the Home Fleet. Every so often working-up destroyers were ordered to screen *Victorious* or one of the battleships on exercises, or might even join the fleet for some operation. This was considered good experience, but it did interfere with a proper training programme which could only have been completed if there had been enough destroyers.

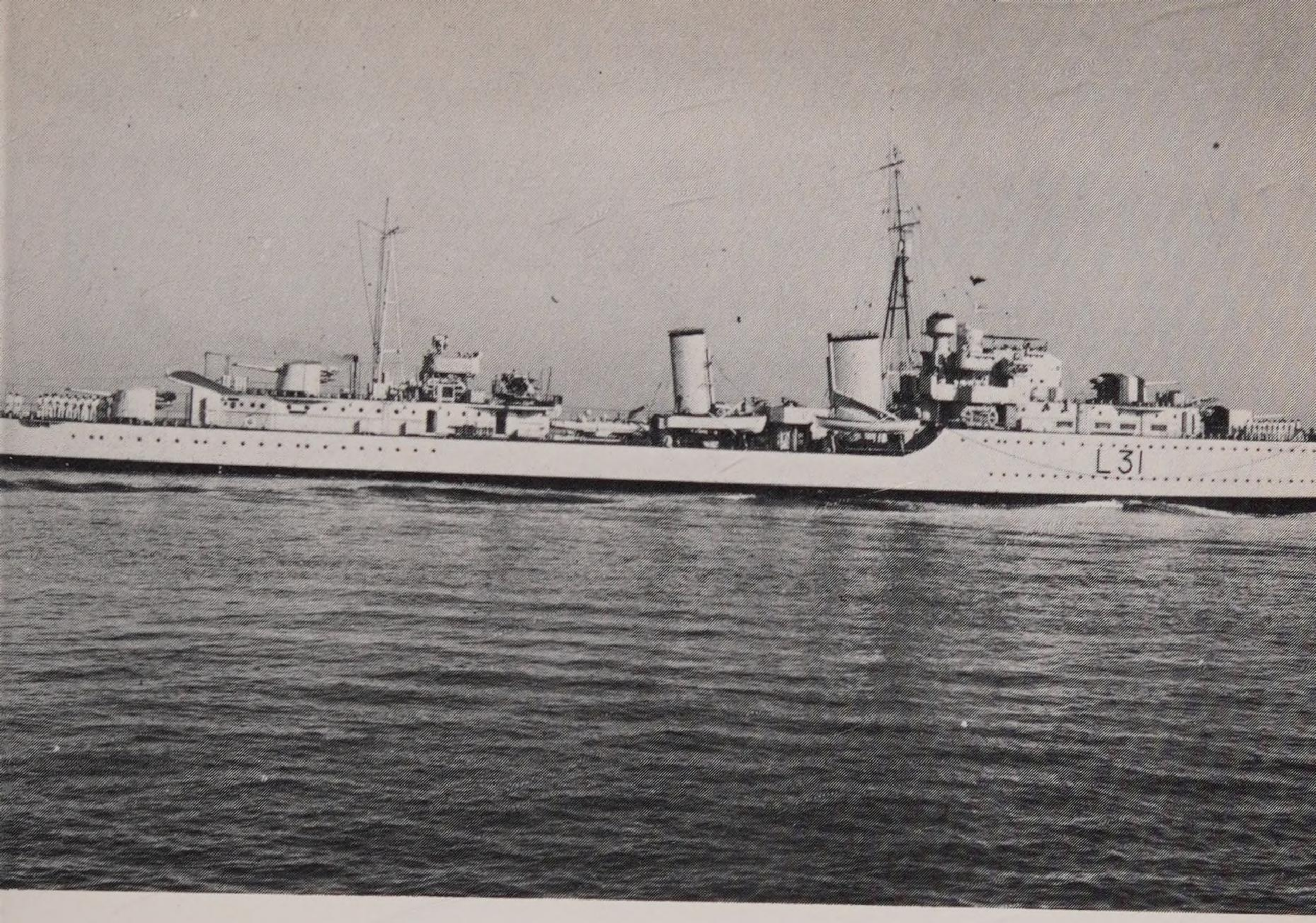
The Home Fleet ships spent about a month based at Scapa Flow and a month at Hvalfiord in Iceland, although a report of German raiders at sea usually sent all ships hurrying off to Iceland. There was very little 'civilisation' at either place, but after a month the crews looked forward to a change of scenery, no matter how depressing they would find it after a few days. So the autumn of 1941 passed in patrols and sweeps and constant exercises with occasional boiler-cleaning alongside *Woolwich* at Scapa. In September, *Ashanti*, *Matabele*, *Punjabi* and *Eskimo* escorted *Bedouin* taking the new governor to the Faeroe Islands. On 9th October, *Somali*, *Eskimo*, *Ashanti*, *Bedouin*, *Matabele* and *Punjabi* escorted *Victorious*, *King George V* and *Penelope* in an air strike against Bodo. *Somali* and *Matabele* were supposed to carry out an anti-shipping sweep in Vestfiord, but that part of the operation was cancelled. The weather was so bad that *Bedouin* lost two men overboard and both her gyros went off the board. A later suggestion that *Somali*, *Matabele*, *Ashanti* and *Eskimo* should patrol inshore north and south of Alesund was also called off.

The approach of winter brought even worse weather. Katabatic storms (caused by a sudden flow of heavy cold air down a mountainside into the comparatively warmer valley), were a feature of Hvalfiord. Once *Ashanti* dragged her anchor through a narrow passage and right through the fleet, fouling and breaking the C-in-C's telephone cable to the Admiralty.

Just before Christmas 1941 the Tribals learned that they were to take part in an ambitious operation in the Lofoten Islands. Force Z (the cruiser *Arethusa*, the destroyers *Somali*, *Bedouin*, *Ashanti*, *Eskimo*, *Wheatland*, *Krakowiak* and *Kujawiak*, the corvettes *Eglantine* and *Acanthus*, the minesweepers *Speedwell*, *Harrier* and *Halcyon*, the LSIs *Prins Albert* and *Prinsess Charlotte*, the oilers *Black Ranger* and *Gray Ranger*, the survey ship *Scott*, the armament supply ship *Gudrun Maersk* and the tug *Jaunty*) would approach Vestfiord, its entrance marked by the submarine *Sealion*. They would cut the telegraph cable linking the islands, clear any Germans out of the village of Rheine and use it as a base for offensive operations against German coastal shipping

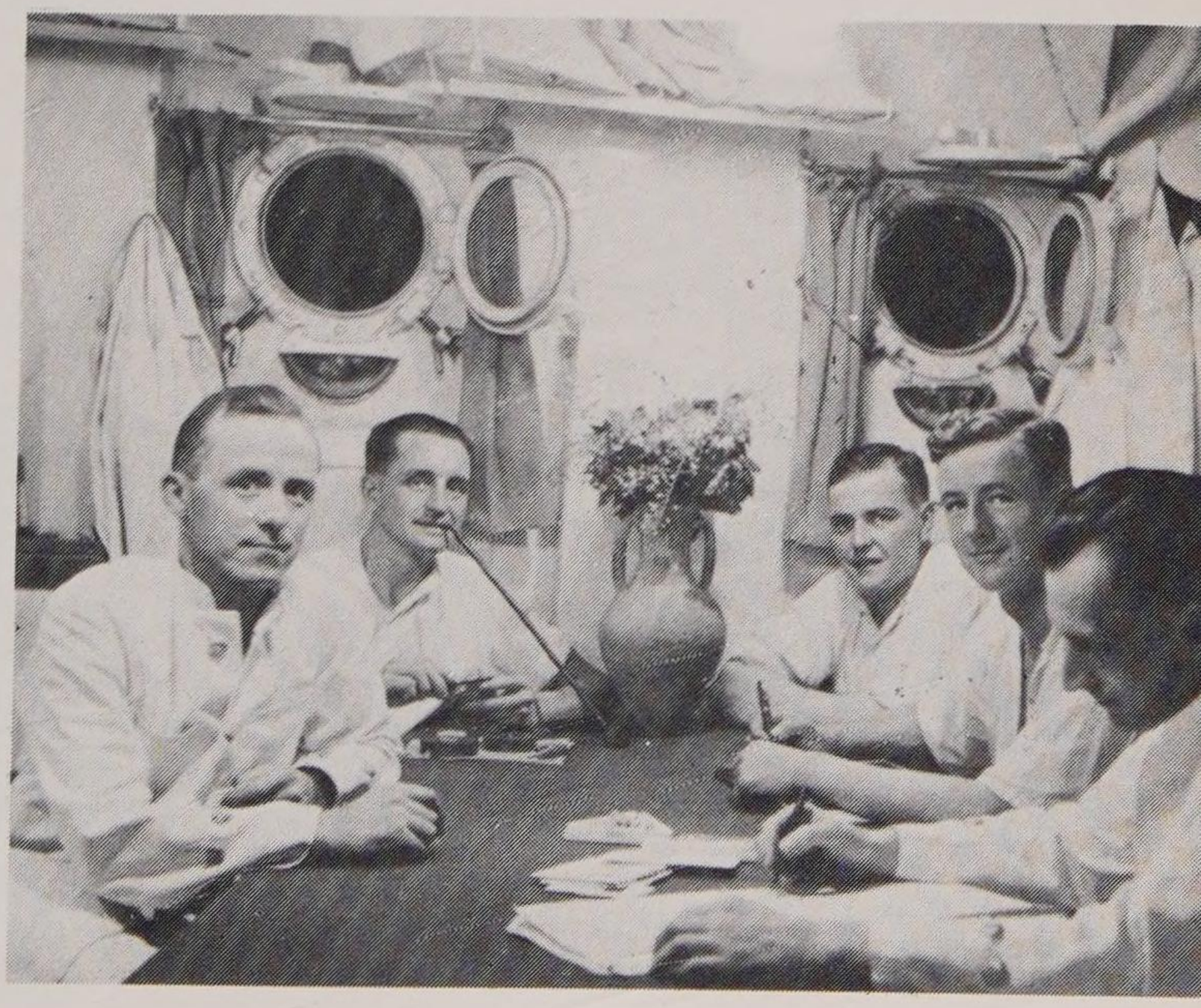
Afridi working up in the Channel, May 1938. [*Charles E. Brown – via Mrs. K. Creswell*

Top: Mohawk's foremast is swung into position at Thornycroft's Yard, Woolston January 1938. [*P. A. Vicary*

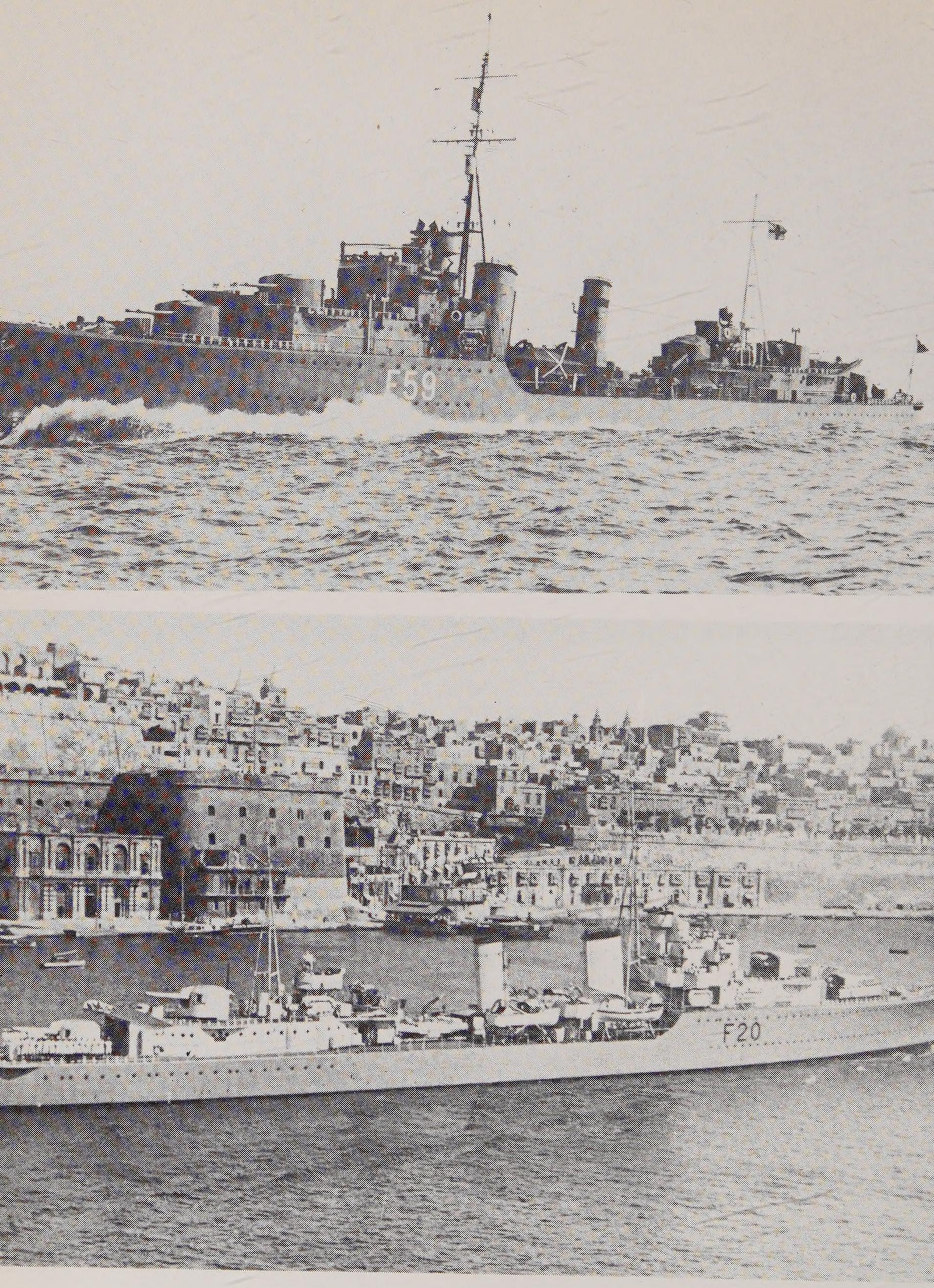


An immaculate *Mohawk* leaves Malta in November 1938. Note the red, white and blue stripes on 'B' mounting. [*A. & J. Pavia*

Left: Afridi towing *Shropshire* during exercises in the Western Mediterranean, July 1938.
[*Fox Photos*



The Engine-Room Artificers' mess in *Cossack* before the war. [*S. G. Ramell*



Gurkha at Malta in 1939. One of the few photographs of this ship in existence.
[*A. & J. Pavia*

Top: Mashona wearing the Vickers-Armstrong house flag while running builder's trials early in 1939. [*IWM*

1st March 1939. The Durbar at Prince of Wales Park, Kumasi, when the Asantahene and the people of Ashanti presented a silver bell and a gold shield to their destroyer.

[*S. G. Pikesley*

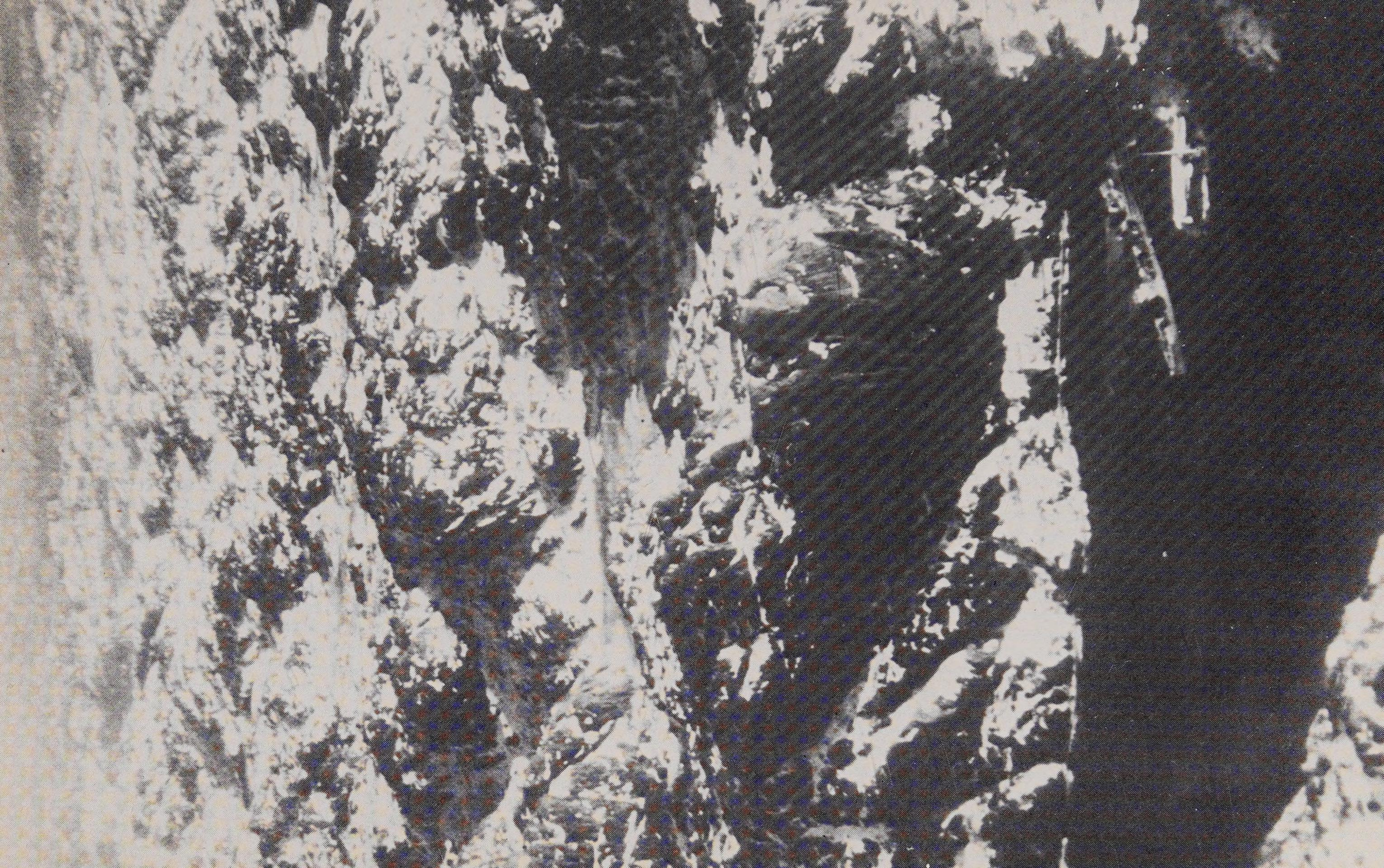
Above: Admiral Sir Martin Dunbar-Nasmith, VC (C-in-C Plymouth), inspects *Tartar* during her official commissioning ceremony at Devonport on 31st March 1939. Captain Warner and Lieutenant-Commander Holland-Martin are just behind the Flag-Lieutenant. [*Western Morning News*

Left: Aunty May (Mrs. D. C. Hanrahan) – a photograph taken in London in 1930.

[*Rear-Admiral W. H. Selby*

Somali, Mashona, Brazen, Grebecock and *Vigilant* ring the stern of the submarine *Thetis* on the morning of 2nd June 1939. [*Keystone*

Right: Somali closes the first enemy aircraft to be shot down in the Second World War – a Dornier Do 18. Note the Lewis gun on *Somali*'s bridge. (26th September 1939.)
[*Central Press – via Rear-Admiral M. A. McMullen*

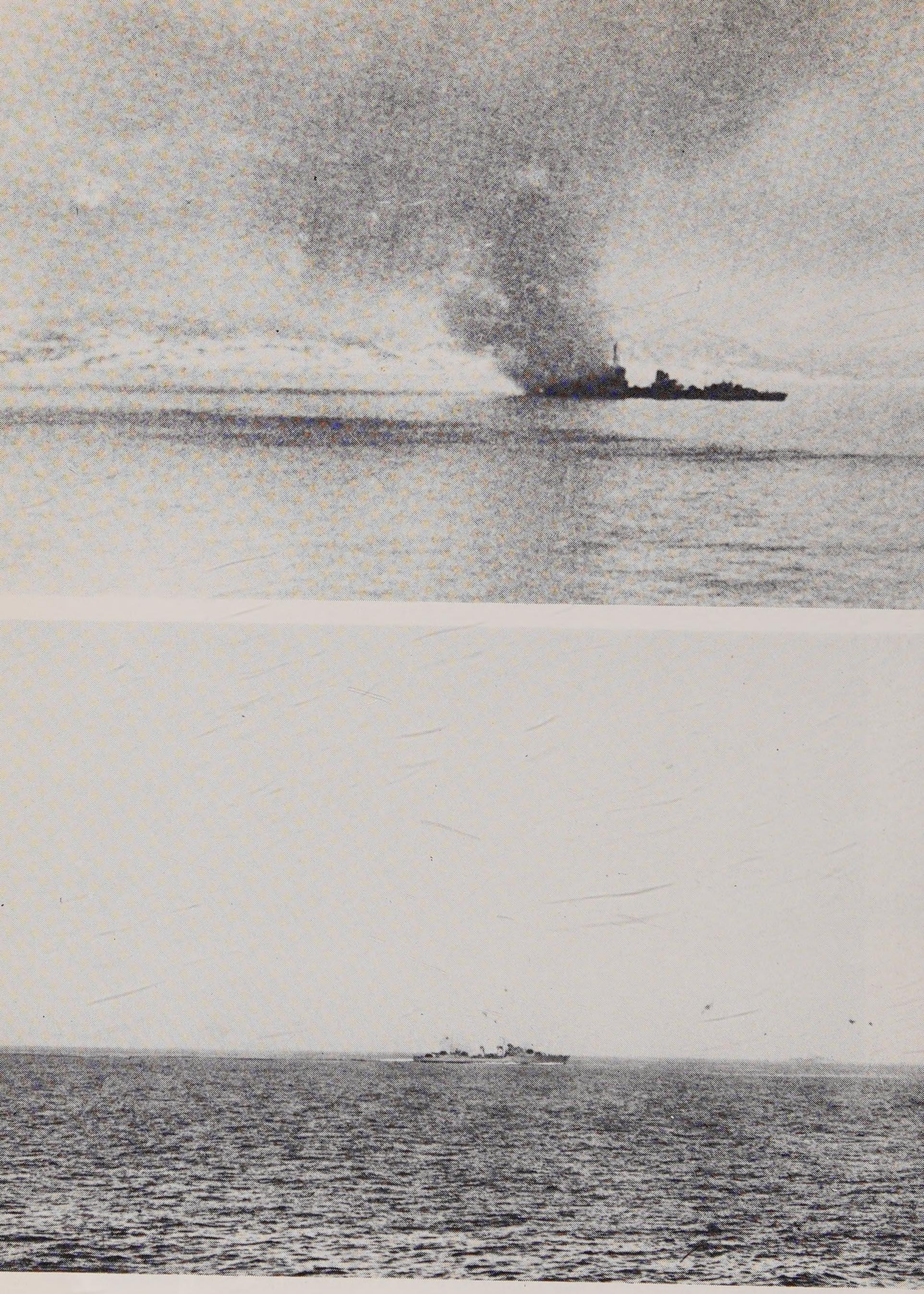


Cossack arriving at Leith with the *Altmark* prisoners, 18th February 1940. [*Keystone*

Left: Altmark still in Jossingfiord after the release of her prisoners. [*IWM*

Punjabi and *Eskimo* firing at *Erich Koellner* lurking in Ballengenfiord, 1230, 13th April 1940.
[*Lt.-Cdr. R. C. Henley*

1500, 13th April 1940. Shock waves ripple outwards from *Eskimo*, hit by a torpedo from *Georg Thiele,* herself burning in Rombaksfiord. *Forester* stands by. This photograph was taken from a Swordfish, its own tailplane damaged by flak. [*IWM*



3rd May 1940; *Afridi*'s last action. *Nubian* in the distance. [*IWM*

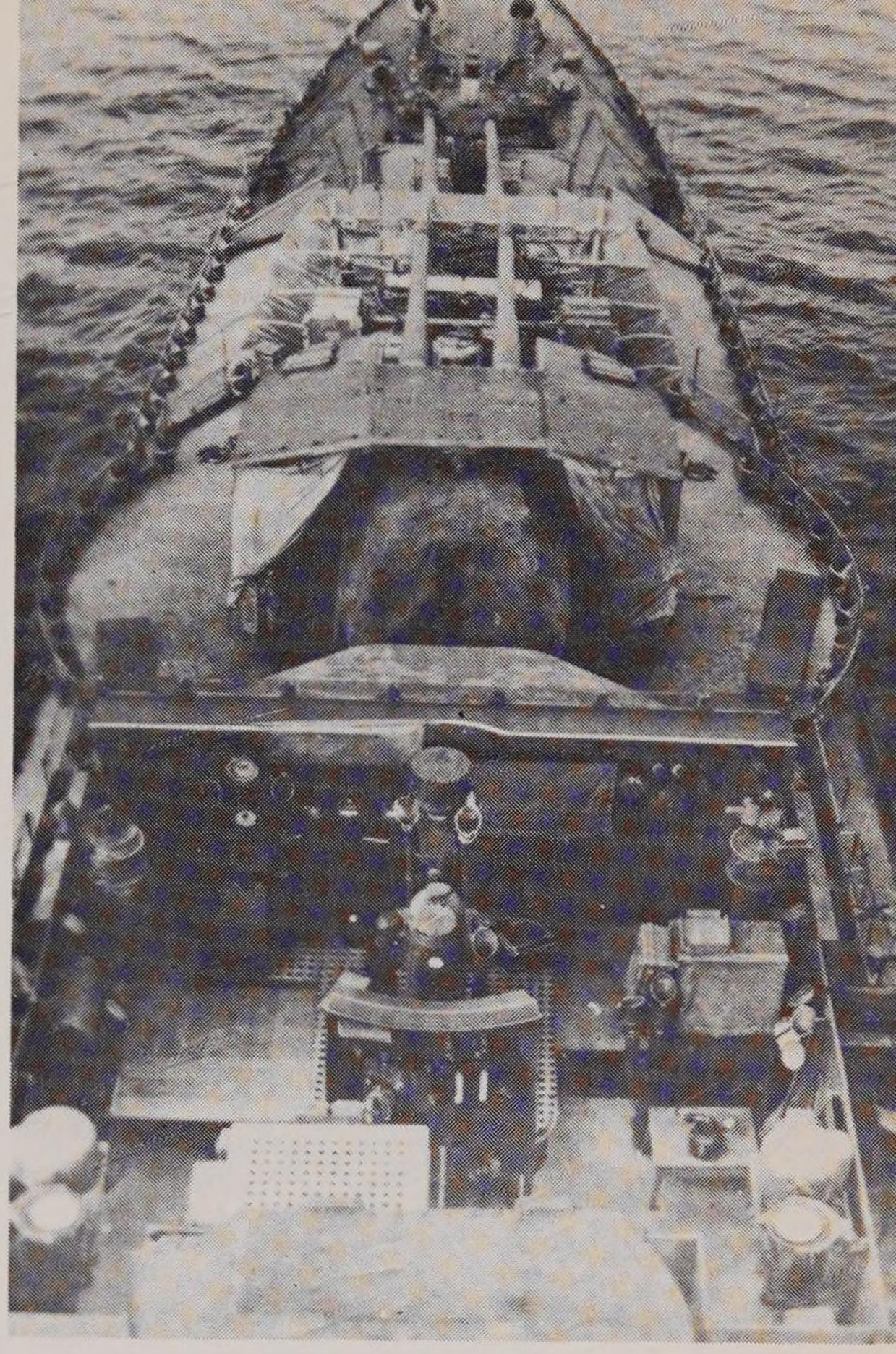
Top: Erich Giese drifting across Ofotfiord, 13th April 1940. [*IWM*

The end of *Afridi*. [*IWM*

Boats from *Enterprise* and *Bedouin* rescuing *Grom* survivors; Ofotfiord, 4th May 1940.
[*Lt.-Cdr. R. C. Henley*

Left: Somali arrives at Harstad escorting RAF personnel. A broad black band on the forefunnel denotes she is the flotilla leader of 6th DF (indicated by the white ring on her afterfunnel). As leader, her pennant number is not painted up. [*IWM*

Right: The view from *Tartar*'s crow's nest (1940). [*Ludovic Kennedy*



Punjabi has a 'make-and-mend' alongside *Rodney* in August 1940. [*IWM*

Left: After temporary repairs, *Eskimo* leaves Harstad on 1st June 1940. Note extra wooden shores amidships. [*IWM*

Cossack's whaler brings back a torpedo after North Sea exercises, Autumn 1940.
[*IWM*

Captain Vian on the starboard side of *Cossack*'s bridge in the Autumn of 1940.
[*IWM*

in Norwegian waters. They were to stay for as long as practicable up to ninety days – potentially the most ambitious raid of the war. As it would be dark for most of the day in those northern latitudes, and as the sky is invariably overcast, Force Z could not be located by aircraft, and would be powerful enough to deal with any surface forces. Additional protection would be granted by wearing Nazi ensigns as a ruse de guerre. A diversion would be created by a commando raid on the island of Vagsoy much farther south.

At 0800 on Boxing Day 1941, Force Z entered Vestfiord. The weather was calm. There was not a cloud in the sky below 15,000 feet. *Bedouin* went off to cut the cable while *Arethusa* and the other Tribals approached Rheine. *Eskimo* intercepted the Norwegian coaster *Kong Harald* of 125 tons. The only German on board was a doctor and the vessel was sent on into Rheine.

Ashanti closed a small German trawler, armed with one gun and with Christmas trees at the masthead. Her name was *Geier* (V5904) of 145 tons and her crew was still getting over Christmas Day. They surrendered after a couple of salvoes, but feared the worst when they saw *Ashanti*'s guns still being trained on them, and rushed out of sight. Expecting a trap *Ashanti*'s starboard oerlikon was ordered to fire, but soon stopped when it was clear the Germans were leaping over the side into the icy water. The trawler was boarded and the Germans picked up. *Geier* had just been taken in tow while a prize crew tried to get her engines going, when an He115 appeared. *Arethusa* ordered the trawler to be sunk immediately to conceal the fact that she had been boarded and her documents and codebooks had been captured. Two 25lb scuttling charges failed to sink her and she had to be finished off by *Ashanti*'s guns.

Although the Commandos had already seized their targets ashore, other German observers had reported Force Z's presence, hence the He115 and a Ju88 which also arrived. Both aircraft were fired at from time to time. The weather was not what had been expected and it was light for six hours every day.

After *Somali* had detained another coaster, the 725-ton *Nordland*, Force Z spent the night in Rheine harbour and the next day on patrol. 27/28th December was foul and *Ashanti* had to shift her berth three times. Even so, her motor-cutter boarded several fishing boats that came in during the night.

On the 28th one of the tankers arrived with Christmas mail – and so did several enemy aircraft, plus a report that 80 Ju88s had arrived at Stavanger. It was therefore decided to abandon the harbour. The coasters' engines were disabled – they did not have enough coal to reach the UK – and Force Z sailed after dark. They took with them twenty survivors from the trawler, ten other Germans, half a dozen Quislings and those Norwegians who wanted to come. The Tribals carried out a starshell demonstration off a little port at the top end of Vestfiord and rejoined Force Z at sea on the 29th. Apart from an occasional shot at a shadowing Ju88, the main problem on the return passage was a recurrence of *Ashanti*'s feed-water troubles, aggravated by leaks where the new plating joined the old. To make matters worse, the distiller pump was unreliable. The boilers had first call on fresh water and the

ship's company had to make do with contaminated feed-water, which meant, for example, salt-water cocoa during the night watches.

The Vagsoy Raid farther south had been a complete success and hit the headlines, but the Tribals had helped to divert Hitler's attention and resources to Norway. Force Z had remained continuously in enemy-occupied waters and territory for four successive days with no air cover whatsoever. They had inflicted damage on the enemy and come away with only one casualty – an *Ashanti* rating shot in the hand by a rifle bullet. It was really rather a remarkable exploit.

After a boiler clean at Rosyth on 10th January 1942, *Ashanti* returned to Scapa Flow. As she entered the Pentland Firth with a south-easterly gale astern, she met a full spring tide and was almost overwhelmed in the overfalls. When she tried to turn to avoid the rocks, she almost broached to. When she eventually got into the Flow all her boats and stanchions had been smashed and No. 3 boiler had been extinguished by a wave down the after funnel.

Back at Scapa Flow, *Ashanti* spent January and February escorting capital ships on exercises or as they covered the first small convoys to and from Russia. On 23rd February, Tribal destroyers helped to escort *Victorious* in an abortive dash to intercept *Admiral Scheer* and *Prinz Eugen* in the North Sea.

On 5th March, the two convoys PQ12 and QP8 were at sea, when it was reported that the new German battleship *Tirpitz* was trying to intercept them. *Duke of York*, *Renown*, *Kenya*, *Faulknor*, *Eskimo*, *Punjabi*, *Fury*, and *Eclipse* went out from Iceland to meet *King George V*, *Victorious*, *Berwick*, *Onslow*, *Ashanti*, *Bedouin*, *Intrepid*, *Icarus* and *Lookout* from Scapa Flow. The night was violent and it was difficult to keep station in the northerly gale. When morning came, *Faulknor* and *Bedouin* were detached from their respective forces to screen *Sheffield* who had been mined on her way to join the Home Fleet. Soon joined by *Eskimo*, they escorted the damaged cruiser into Seidisfiord. The next day *Faulknor* and *Bedouin* were sent out on anti-submarine patrol but were able to spend 7th March resting and refuelling in Seidisfiord.

At midday on the 8th, *Faulknor*, *Tartar*, *Bedouin* and *Eskimo* were ordered to rejoin the Home Fleet, as most of the C-in-C's escorting destroyers had been detached to sweep the Norwegian coast looking for *Tirpitz*.

Onslow and *Ashanti* had spent the 7/8th in this search and were so short of fuel, it seemed unlikely they would reach Iceland. After a long discussion aboard *Ashanti*, it was decided to open cartridge cases one at a time and pass them down to the boiler room where sticks of cordite would be extracted and fed through the sprayers' viewing ports. Special fire precautions had to be taken and the idea would probably have worked, but it was not tried out. That night *Kent* hove in sight. *Onslow* fuelled first. By the time it was *Ashanti*'s turn it was blowing hard and snowing, with the aurora borealis lighting up the clouds. *Ashanti* was hitting the waves hard. The rising gale threw green water over *Kent*'s fo'c'sle. Wires and hoses parted, but *Ashanti* now had enough to get to Iceland. It was "The Luck of the *Ashanti*."

Faulknor, *Tartar*, *Bedouin* and *Eskimo* joined the Home Fleet on the evening of the 9th March, after *Victorious* had flown off an unsuccessful strike against *Tirpitz* and

after the fleet had itself been attacked by three Ju88s. The destroyers screened the Home Fleet from submarine attack and all arrived at Scapa Flow on the 10/11th.

In the afternoon, *Faulknor*, *Tartar*, *Bedouin*, *Eskimo*, *Punjabi* (soon forced to return with disabled steering gear), *Fury*, *Icarus* and *Intrepid* sailed to have another go at *Tirpitz*. Twenty-four hours later they were in position between Vestfiord and Trondheim, but they were unable to drive off a shadowing aircraft and the night's patrol produced no result. They arrived back at Scapa on 14th March. Six days later *Bedouin* and *Punjabi* were out again in awful weather with the force covering PQ13's passage to Russia.

A refit at Immingham installed HF/DF and put right many of *Ashanti*'s defects but failed to solve her feed-water problems once and for all. It was completed on 7th May and on the 22nd, after conferences and delays, *Ashanti* left Seidisfiord as senior ship of the PQ16 close escort. They joined PQ16 next day in fog, but the convoy closed up when it cleared. While topping up their tanks – a regular routine – the destroyers saw the first German aircraft. From then on a shadower was always in sight. *Ashanti* immediately opened fire while still oiling. (Within a few days however such quick shooting would have to be restricted as ammunition had to be strictly rationed on the following basis: one round only if a shadower came within 10,000 yards; one mounting only if dive-bombers approached; all guns in barrage at dive-bombers within 3,000 yards; all guns during any torpedo-bomber attack, except when they were actually flying away from the convoy.)

After a scare as QP12 cleared a snow squall 5,000 yards away, serious air attacks began. Twelve Ju88s and seven He111s came in at 2030. *Ashanti* and *Volunteer* shot down a Ju88 with one engine blazing. The rest were driven off, having nearmissed the *SS Carlton* who had to be towed back to Iceland. The convoy's sole catapult Sea Hurricane also ditched after scoring against the enemy. At 2300 twelve Ju88s attacked, beginning a series of tip-and-run raids which lasted all through the next twenty-four hours of daylight. The main threat on the 26th came from U-boats. *SS Syros* was torpedoed and sunk, but they scored no further success.

In the early hours of the 27th, PQ16 altered course to avoid pack-ice that was drifting south and a number of small icebergs – white, pale blue and black – passed between the columns of ships. This detour brought the convoy much closer to Luftwaffe airfields and a series of continuous high-level, dive-bombing, and torpedo attacks developed as the cloud base lowered and seasmoke rose. *Empire Lawrence*, *Alamar*, *Normacsul* and *Lowther Castle* were sunk, *Empire Purcell* blew up, *Stari Bolsheviki* and *Ocean Voice* were on fire, and *Empire Baffin* and *City of Joliet* were damaged, the last named sinking later. '*Ashanti* allsorts' were doled out; one aircraft flew into the sea, one flew off trailing smoke and sending distress signals (*Ashanti* carried an RAF 'headache' operator who listened to German wavelengths) and two more were damaged. Desultory air attacks were driven off during the next two days and Commander Onslow signalled the Admiralty "No further attacks touch wood. Shadowers like the poor are always with us". There was another attack to come however, on the 30th after the Murmansk and Archangel sections had parted com-

pany. By now Russian destroyers had joined, the air attack was driven off and soon Russian aircraft escorted PQ16 into Kola Inlet.

Vaenga was an unpleasant place. There was a cinema and there was yak meat, but the Russians there were not particularly friendly and were uncooperative over some matters, such as the treatment of Allied wounded in the hospitals ashore. Still the British crews determined to make the best of it after catching up on their sleep. To the Russians' amazement a regatta was immediately arranged and crews practised boat pulling from 0700 to 2230 for a week. Concerts, uckers championships, shooting competitions and football matches were organised, after a stone hut had been removed from the centre of the pitch.

Two days before the regatta *Ashanti* (who had 30% ammunition left) and *Martin* were ordered to go back to Scapa Flow under cover of a spell of bad weather and then return laden with ammunition for the other escorts. They arrived at Scapa Flow to a terrific welcome from admirals, captains, and pressmen. Two other destroyers were sent back to Vaenga while *Ashanti* and *Martin* were feted.

PQ16 had been such a success that it was decided to send another convoy of war material to Russia immediately. On 25th June all the ships arrived for the convoy conference at Hvalfiord. The warships would be split into three main groups. The through escort of PQ17 itself, a close cover group of cruisers and destroyers (including *Somali*) and the Home Fleet as distant cover with *Ashanti* as one of the screen. PQ17 had already sailed when the covering forces went into Seidisfiord for fuel and another conference. By 3rd July, the forces were in position and the next day *Somali* closed PQ17 off Bear Island to transfer despatches to the leader of the close escort and to fuel from the oiler *Aldersdale*. By 1815, *Somali* had rejoined the cruisers ten miles ahead of the convoy. PQ17 had already beaten off air attacks which had sunk three ships, when at 2230, under orders from the Admiralty, the convoy scattered and destroyers withdrew to the westward at high speed. At any minute 15in shells would be plunging among the merchant ships and their escorts, while the cruisers and destroyers raced to attack *Tirpitz* as soon as she hove in sight over the horizon. Neither happened. The merchantmen were decimated by aircraft and U-boats, while the Home Fleet returned disconsolately to Iceland and Scapa Flow.

The PQ17 controversy had begun, but the war still had to go on. In spite of Russian recriminations, the Kola convoys were suspended for the rest of the summer. The USSR might just survive until winter; Malta would not, unless food, ammunition and fuel reached the island.

Ashanti sorted out more feed-water problems in the floating-dock at Scapa Flow and fitted extra oerlikons, including one right aft by the depth-charges. Then on 2/3rd August, *Ashanti*, *Eskimo*, *Somali* and *Tartar* left escorting a powerful cover force. The next morning they met the Pedestal convoy and its close escort from the Clyde. Many U-boats were reported en route to Gibraltar, but the convoy was undisturbed and spent the passage exercising every conceivable evolution. There were more exercises when they met the carriers west of Gibraltar. While the convoy passed through the Strait on the 10/11th, the destroyers and some of the other warships took

it in turns to refuel at Gibraltar. *Ashanti* was now attached to the close escort, while *Eskimo*, *Somali* and *Tartar* remained with the covering ships (Force Z). Because there was no spare oil at Malta, the destroyers topped up from the tankers *Dingledale* and *Brown Ranger* south of the Balearics. While the screen was thus depleted, the carrier *Eagle* was torpedoed and sunk by a U-boat about midday on the 11th. That evening the convoy was attacked by Ju88s and the next morning the battle began in earnest.

Battleships and cruisers were tucked in close to the convoy, with the carriers astern where they were free to manoeuvre when operating their aircraft. The destroyers formed an anti-submarine and anti-aircraft screen in a circle 4,000 yards from the convoy. For the next three days and two nights the ships were at continuous action stations. Galley fires were out because of the fire risk, but electric heaters were available for boiling water and soup. As all the cooks, stewards and supply ratings were closed up at their action stations, over 1,000lb of sandwiches had to be cut up by the supply parties. Each man was allotted thirty minutes a day to wash himself and obey the calls of nature. They were lucky if they got eighty minutes sleep in sixty hours. By the end of the battle some people had to be sent to bed with swollen ankles through standing so long. All were indescribably weary and the desire for sleep was overwhelming.

At 0900 on the 12th an attack by Ju88s was driven off. In the next raid at 1200 the merchant ship *Deucalion* was damaged and she had to be sunk later. At 1345 *Tartar* depth-charged a contact with no result. For the rest of the afternoon the destroyers investigated asdic contacts. *Ithuriel* sank the submarine *Cobalto* and at 1640 *Tartar* saw another torpedo track. She was joined by *Lookout* and together they hunted the 962-ton *Emo*. They could not wait so they had to be content with keeping the submarine down and harmless until the convoy had passed by.

At 1830 the Sicilian airfields took over from those in Sardinia. *Foresight* and *Indomitable* were damaged. Twenty minutes later *Tartar* took *Foresight* in tow, but they were unable to reach Gibraltar. The next day, shadowed by aircraft and stalked by a U-boat, *Tartar* took off *Foresight*'s crew and sank her with a torpedo.

At 1900 Force Z turned back so that the big ships would not be exposed to minefields and E-boats off Cape Bon – in any case, by dawn Malta-based fighters should be overhead. Almost immediately *Nigeria*, *Cairo* and the tanker *Ohio* were torpedoed by the Italian submarine *Axum*. *Cairo* had to be sunk, but *Ohio* got her fires out and kept going. It was decided to send *Nigeria* back to Gibraltar, so *Ashanti* went alongside to take off Rear-Admiral Burrough and his staff. He came on board in impeccable whites, rather marred by the fact that he had waded through a foot of fuel oil. He was greeted by "a horde of ruffians dressed in football jerseys" and on the bridge by Commander Onslow wearing his famous straw hat. Encouragement was shouted across to *Ohio* and then *Ashanti* and *Penn* tried to lay a smokescreen across the stern of the convoy, thus preventing the ships being silhouetted against the sunset. It was a vain effort for aircraft soon sank *Empire Hope* and *Clan Ferguson*, and damaged *Brisbane Star*. *Ashanti* ordered her to close the French-held African coast to try to work her way along it.

Because Italian warships were reported approaching the convoy, *Ashanti*, *Manchester* and *Kenya* (with 20 feet of her bows wrecked by a U-boat's torpedo) concentrated at the van of the convoy. Reinforcements in the shape of *Charybdis*, *Somali* and *Eskimo* were on their way from Force Z, but the main danger of the night came from E-boats, who attacked the convoy with torpedoes from both sides. The action lasted all night. By dawn on the 13th, the merchant ships *Santa Elisa*, *Almeria Lykes* and *Glenorchy* had been sunk and *Manchester* and *Wairangi* disabled.

The Italian fleet had not intervened so *Somali* and *Eskimo* were ordered to find *Manchester* and escort her back to Gibraltar. They rescued the *Wairangi* and *Almeria Lykes* survivors and then the two Tribals looked for *Manchester*. The cruiser had already gone down. A few of her survivors were picked up and many more could be seen on the African shore. The French coastal batteries made it clear that they would fire if the destroyers came any nearer and presently the Manchesters were marched off to be interned. *Somali* and *Eskimo* then caught up *Nigeria* and her escort and headed for Gibraltar.

Meanwhile, the battle was still raging as the Pedestal convoy neared Malta. *Ashanti* was nearmissed by E-boat torpedoes while British gunfire hit several of their attackers. Once mines were reported. At 0800 the dive-bombers began again. *Waimarama*, laden with petrol and ammunition, blew up in sheets of flame and *Dorset* was disabled and sank later. *Ashanti* put out a fire in No. 1 boiler room and shot down a Ju87 which flew into *Ohio* adding to the tanker's extensive damage. *Port Chalmers* caught a live torpedo in her paravane sweepwire, so *Ashanti* came in close to advise her how to get rid of it.

Now there were only three merchant ships still underway but at 1400 *Port Chalmers*, *Melbourne Star* and *Rochester Castle* entered Grand Harbour. *Brisbane Star* and *Ohio* were yet to arrive, but the escorts had done their job. They handed over to the local ships and headed for Gibraltar.

For another night and a day they fought off E-boats, U-boats and aircraft. Several enemy planes were shot down, *Ashanti* accounting for a Savoia-Marchetti torpedo-bomber. They reached Gibraltar on 14/15th August. *Ashanti*'s sole damage had been caused by a .303in bullet which had hit the oerlikon call-up buzzer on the bridge.

Tartar stayed at Gibraltar for a while, but *Ashanti*, *Eskimo* and *Somali* escorted *Rodney* directly to the UK, receiving another great welcome from the Home Fleet. But there was no resting in laurels for ships or men, and both were very tired. *Ashanti* spent a week alongside *Tyne* cleaning boilers, repairing feed-water tanks and checking the oil fuel leak into the bilges which had caused the boiler room fire during Pedestal. There were gunnery, torpedo and anti-submarine exercises and planning conferences.

From the exhausting heat of the Mediterranean, the Tribals were sent back to the bitter cold of the next Arctic convoy. Later in the war the surviving Tribals were arcticised; steam or electric heating was supplied to the gun mountings, torpedo tubes and directors, and special insulation was fitted. In 1942 guns could only be freed from ice by chipping, training and firing. Special clothing was issued but it never seemed warm enough and even with all the heating on, breath froze on internal bulkheads.

On 6th September, *Ashanti*, *Eskimo*, *Somali* and other destroyers sailed via Iceland to Spitsbergen, where they fuelled from *Oligarch* and *Blue Ranger*. When the full escort joined PQ18 to the south the convoy had already encountered gales, aircraft and U-boats. Two merchantmen and a U-boat had been sunk. At 1500 on the 13th, six Ju88s heralded a massive Golden Comb attack through a snow squall half an hour later. Up to fifty-five He111s each carrying two torpedoes, flew towards the convoy in line abreast 100–150 yards apart and 35 feet above the waves. At the same time thirty Ju88s launched a dive- and skip-bombing attack. When the enemy pulled away, seven merchant ships were sunk or sinking. Two more air raids were broken up by Sea Hurricanes from the escort carrier *Avenger*, but early the next morning a U-boat sank the oiler *Atheltemplar*. Within an hour a U-boat had been depth-charged and sunk, and at 1235 a two-hour air raid by groups of Ju88s and He111s began. Their main target was *Avenger*, but their only success was a torpedo hit on the *SS Mary Luckenbach*, who blew up. From then on thick cloud began to form, and although aircraft continued their attacks on the 15th, they did so through the clouds and without success. Another U-boat was sunk on the 16th and at 1500 most of the escort began to transfer to QP14 at the entrance to the White Sea. The move was carried out in three stages so that the Germans would not realise what was happening.

By 0300 on the 17th, the transfer was complete and the escorts refuelled from *Gray Ranger* and *Black Ranger* off Hope Island. U-boats and aircraft could not find QP14 in the fog that now swirled around them, and as an additional ruse QP14 detoured north along the Spitsbergen coast where the destroyers again refuelled from *Oligarch*. On 20th September the fog started to clear. Bitter cold and snow squalls made carrier operations difficult and a pack of U-boats soon located the convoy. *Leda* was torpedoed and sunk in the morning and the *SS Silver Sword* in the afternoon. Soon afterwards *Avenger* and *Scylla* left the convoy.

Meanwhile *Ashanti* had sighted a U-boat on the surface. The submarine was ten miles away but was magnified by refraction. *Ashanti* gave chase at full speed, firing her 4.7in guns as the U-boat dived. The hunt went on for two hours, contact being continually lost in the dense layers of cold water from melting ice away to the north. Occasionally she depth-charged a fleeting swirl or faint echo. With only two depth-charges left, *Ashanti* rejoined the convoy at full speed, leaving the U-boat twenty miles astern. Being then short of oil, *Ashanti* changed places with *Somali* on the inner screen to await a favourable opportunity to refuel.

At 1920 *Somali* took up *Ashanti*'s position and was hit amidships by a torpedo. The explosion blew the torpedo tubes over the side and cut or buckled all the port-side main stringers so that the ship was only held together by the upper deck and starboard-side as far as the keel. The port main engine fell through the bottom of the ship and the whole of the engine and gearing rooms filled with water. The leaking bulkheads either side were promptly shored up and seemed to be holding, but there was no light or power except from an unreliable auxiliary diesel generator which powered bilge pumps in the flooding compartments. The trawler *Lord Middleton* took

off most of *Somali*'s crew and transferred them to other ships. The eighty left on board were forbidden to go below except on urgent jobs and when off duty sheltered under a tarpaulin on the fo'c'sle. *Ashanti* hunted unsuccessfully for U-70 and then took her crippled, listing sister-ship in tow at 7 knots, using *Somali*'s own wire. They were circled by *Eskimo*, *Opportune* and *Intrepid* (who soon left). The flat calm sea was ideal for towing and was also ideal for showing up periscopes.

Presently the wire parted and *Somali* had to slip it because she had no power to haul it in. Commander Onslow put *Ashanti*'s stern right under *Somali*'s bow and this time rigged *Ashanti*'s wire. Five shackles of cable gave a deep catenary to absorb sudden strains, but *Somali*'s hand steering was too slow to control her yaw. Even at 5 knots the wire was vibrating as the bight dragged through the water. During the dusk of the 20/21st, *Ashanti*'s motor-cutter took working parties across to help throw all removable gear overboard. Food, rum and candles were also ferried across. The little boat, normally so very temperamental, ran perfectly for the whole tow.

All through the 21st they crawled towards Akureyri. That evening *Somali*'s dynamo seized up at last and she had to use hand pumps. These could not cope with the inflow of water and *Somali*'s 17° list increased. All ships contributed lengths of shore-lighting electric cable to provide power from *Ashanti*. A boat party then spent four hours up to their elbows in freezing water, hitching the cable to a fog-buoy wire alongside the towing-wire. It did not work and had to be hauled in again so that each joint could be checked. Then someone found a reel of insulated cable in *Somali*'s tiller flat. It was brand new and was still coated in its original french chalk. *Lord Middleton* brought it over to *Ashanti*. Within an hour it had been rigged and electric pumps had reduced *Somali*'s list to 12°. The steering gear could now be worked, so speed was increased to 6 knots. *Somali*'s crew could now have lights and hot meals. A telephone cable was also fixed up between *Ashanti* and *Somali*. Now the problem was fuel. *Ashanti* was very low indeed when two ships were sighted approaching from the east – the oiler *Blue Ranger* and her escorting destroyer. *Eskimo* fuelled first, then *Opportune* and then a buoyant hose was floated across to *Ashanti*. She refuelled while still towing; *Blue Ranger*, *Ashanti*, *Somali*, *Ashanti*'s motor-boat – all joined together in line ahead.

By the 23/24th, *Ashanti* had towed *Somali* for 420 miles. Then the unnaturally calm weather, which had so encouraged their hopes, broke. *Blue Ranger* was stationed ahead to release oil. *Lord Middleton* was astern to pick up survivors.

About 0100, the northerly gale had become so severe that the oil slick dumped by *Blue Ranger* had no effect on the waves, nor could *Lord Middleton* take off those men still on board.

Somali's plates were working violently and groaning terribly. In the middle of a thick snow squall the watchers on *Ashanti*'s bridge saw a blue flash aft – the tow-wire and electric cable had snapped. The end hanging over *Ashanti*'s stern had to be cleared before she could manoeuvre properly.

Meanwhile a 20in searchlight lit up the scene. *Somali* had folded in half like a hinge, bow and stern climbing skywards deck to deck. For a moment she hung,

then the deck-plating-hinge snapped and her bulkheads collapsed. Her stern capsized and sank quickly. Men could be seen climbing onto the front of the bridge, now horizontal. The bow section sank steadily and vertically. The sea reached the bridge. *Somali* was gone.

The escorts drifted downwind through the survivors, struggling in the icy water. About thirty were washed aboard *Lord Middleton* as she rolled – not all of them were still alive. The destroyers picked up four men between them, the rescuers hanging onto scrambling nets, with lifelines round their waists, trying to grab men in the water. Two men on *Ashanti* held one unconscious figure for fifteen minutes but they could not lift him. Every seven seconds all three dipped into the sea. Eventually he fell off and was killed by the bilge keel. Several were rolled under by the ships, but they were already frozen into unconsciousness. Lieutenant-Commander Maud, *Somali*'s Captain, was gaffed by a meathook tailed through *Ashanti*'s torpedo-davit and hauled aboard. He was one of the few who survived – in fact, within six hours he was on *Ashanti*'s bridge.

For a while *Lord Middleton* was also missing. The others had to search for her, before heading, so sadly, so silently, for base.

Ashanti was immediately sent to Rosyth for boiler cleaning and leave, but the memory of that night persisted. Much thought was given to home-made devices which would ensure that never again would *Ashanti* lose survivors when they were so close.

At the end of October, *Eskimo*, *Ashanti* and *Tartar* joined Force H for Operation Torch, screening the big ships en route to North Africa. Drills and exercises occupied their unmolested passage through the North Atlantic. Once inside the Mediterranean, Force H covered the large assault convoys and absorbed most of the air and sub-marine attacks that developed. *Argonaut* and *Ashanti* were ordered to encourage this, thus providing extra help for the convoys. Both ships steamed off making fake signals to mislead the enemy into attacking Force H for a time.

On 8th November, the landings in North Africa began, while Force H cruised offshore to deal with any interference by the Italian or French fleets. During this period an Albacore sighted a surfaced U-boat and called up *Ashanti* and *Tartar*. *Ashanti*'s 20in searchlight lit up the U-boat as she turned inside the destroyer and dived. She was so close that 'B' guns could not bear, but *Ashanti* was in a good position to fire depth-charges. *Tartar* was also heading for the U-boat and both destroyers had to go full astern and hard over to avoid a collision just as the Albacore depth-bombed the U-boat's swirl. In the confusion and welter of water the U-boat got away.

Ashanti spent some time screening *Argus* while she provided air cover over the beaches. During this early stage in the operation warships usually fuelled from tankers or at Gibraltar, but once the harbour had been cleared the fleet began using Mers-El-Kebir as an advanced base. This meant a lot of extra work for the destroyers who had to patrol off the harbour entrance until adequate defences had been established. Berthing facilities were generally not good in rough weather. Once *Ashanti* had to slip both anchors when a liner broke adrift and cut *Ashanti*'s buoy ropes with her

screws. Such incidents always seemed to be happening, and circling torpedoes were an added hazard. *Ashanti* rigged up a personal boom-defence and all destroyers in harbour were instructed to copy her. On another occasion *Ashanti* had just left Oran when petrol storage tanks alongside her berth were hit during an air raid and the whole area went up in flames.

By now Bone was being used as an advanced base for a striking force operating against Rommel's supply convoys. There were four cruisers and four destroyers split into two groups of two of each. One team would be relaxing at Algiers while the other operated from Bone. *Ashanti* and *Quality* were linked with *Sirius* and *Dido*. Nothing was intercepted. The Germans preferred to send in supplies by day as they still held command of the air in this area. Often a couple of Ju88s attacked the ships at dawn when they were returning to port. The force was depleted in December 1942 when *Argonaut* had her bow and stern blown off by torpedoes. She could still make 11 knots and all the destroyers were sent out to escort her in.

In January 1943 *Ashanti* returned to Gibraltar for repairs to her feed-water tanks. When berthing alongside *Renown*, the destroyer chipped her screw on the battle-cruiser's bilge keel. Two spells in dock followed at Gibraltar and Mers-El-Kebir and then *Ashanti* joined the escort of a convoy of LSIs heading for the Cape of Good Hope and beyond. One, *Empire Might*, broke down after a boiler room fire. *Ashanti* took her in tow, and tried to catch up the convoy. *Empire Might* got her boilers lit again one by one, until four out of her five were functioning. *Ashanti* still kept towing until together they were making 13½ knots. They kept this up for 600 miles and were only 40 miles astern of the convoy when *Empire Might* was ordered into Dakar and *Ashanti* back to Gibraltar. Although they did not know it at the time, the ships were destined to form the Port Said section of the Sicily invasion force – there was no hurry for that yet.

Ashanti returned to Bone at the end of March, joining *Aurora*, *Penelope* and *Tartar* on patrols off the African coast. By now destroyer-only sweeps were the general rule and so the two Tribals were out every other night. There were a couple of near-interceptions but *Ashanti* found nothing. She was now pronounced unfit for operations and was sent to Malta for her defects to be rectified. She remained in the Mediterranean after her refit, her last task being a fast run from Gibraltar to Malta with a storeroom full of newly printed notes to replace the money worn out during the siege.

Ashanti underwent a major refit in Green and Silley Weir's dock on the Isle of Dogs from July to October. The principal alteration was a lattice foremast to carry the weight of the latest radar equipment. The machine-guns were replaced by 20mm oerlikons and her standard displacement was increased to 1,990 tons. Only time would tell whether her feed-water problems had been solved.

Ashanti arrived at Scapa Flow on 15th October to begin her working up and her service with the Home Fleet. By now, lengthening Arctic nights afforded some protection, so Russian convoys could start again. RA54A (the ships who had spent the summer in Russia) was first brought back to the UK. The cover force included the Canadian Tribal *Haida*. Then *Ashanti* spent some time at Akureyri with the cover

force for JW54A, JW54B and RA54B. The first of these convoys left Loch Ewe on 15th November and arrived at Kola on 22nd November after an uneventful passage. The escort, which included *Haida*, *Huron* and *Iroquois*, left with RA54B on 26th November and returned to Scapa Flow on 5th December.

From now on *Ashanti* would be working closely with the Canadian Tribals and she and *Haida* became chummy ships. On 12th December, however, it was in company with *Athabaskan* that *Ashanti* left Scapa to escort JW55A to Kola. On the 18th *Athabaskan* got a radar contact on a surfaced U-boat, but it dived as soon as starshell had been fired. Depth-charges were dropped and then contact was lost. JW55A arrived at Kola at the same time as the covering force (*Belfast*, *Norfolk* and *Sheffield*) on 20/21st December. Forty-eight hours later the destroyers sailed with RA55A followed by the cruisers.

JW55B had already left the UK with *Haida*, *Huron* and *Iroquois* in the escort. They had trouble with a U-boat but the main event for both convoys was the Battle of North Cape on Boxing Day 1943. The battlecruiser *Scharnhorst* tried to intercept the convoys but was herself trapped and sunk by the covering forces. The Tribals were ready to attack *Scharnhorst* if she got too close to the convoy but they were not called upon to do so. It was perhaps just as well. Rough weather had upset *Ashanti*'s radar and she had received such a hammering from the heavy seas that 'A' mounting had ripped a strip out of the fo'c'sle deckhead and water was continually pouring into the fo'c'sle messdeck. Her sole casualty on the Russian convoys was a rating suffering from chronic seasickness. He recovered when transferred to a larger ship.

Ashanti and *Athabaskan* reached Scapa on 31st December. *Haida*, *Huron* and *Iroquois* arrived a week later with RA55B. Their Christmas dinner had been interrupted by an air raid on Kola, while on the return journey, *Haida* and *Huron* had depth-charged a possible submarine contact with no result.

The main event of 1944 was to be the invasion of Europe – of this, there could be no doubt. The Tribals had a role to play in this great operation, and they would, in fact, be fulfilling exactly the function for which they had been designed. During Operation Overlord, a series of patrols in the Straits of Dover and the mouth of the English Channel would prevent enemy destroyers, coastal craft and submarines from interfering with the landings. While waiting for D-Day, Allied warships would cut the German coastal convoy routes, thus throwing an even greater strain on the bombed and sabotaged roads and railways of France. For this purpose a flotilla of similar vessels was to be formed at Plymouth – the 10th DF itself part of Force 26.

Ashanti and *Athabaskan* accordingly left Scapa Flow in *King George V*'s escort bound for the Azores. They waited there while the battleship went to Gibraltar to pick up Mr Churchill after his stay in North Africa.

During the war *Ashanti* received many comforts from the Asantehene and the people of the Gold Coast and the ship had also been adopted by Southend. School-children had often sent the destroyer parcels of books with little notes and letters inside. To try to repay their kindness, *Ashanti* stocked up with fruit in the Azores – a rare luxury in wartime Britain. When *Ashanti* and *Athabaskan* escorted *King George V*

into Plymouth on 15th January 1944, these presents were sent on to Southend.

The 10th DF leader, *Tartar*, was already there and soon the rest of the flotilla joined: *Haida*, *Iroquois*, *Huron*, *Eskimo*, *Javelin*, *Blyskawica* and *Piorun*. These last two were Polish ships, their crews "tragic and dedicated killers". Once, the 10th DF was on a dusk patrol off Land's End when the destroyers were approached by an aircraft flying out from Cornwall. The Poles immediately shot it down – they had instantly recognised it as a German reconnaissance plane.

Not everything worked so efficiently. On another occasion *Ashanti*, *Haida* and *Huron* chased three E-boats sighted by an aircraft nine miles ahead. They did not seem to be gaining on the enemy and it turned out that they themselves were being shadowed by a friendly aircraft nine miles out of position. At night they occasionally mistook rocky French islets for boats close inshore and fired at them. German shore batteries also took a hand in the destroyers' actions. There was one big railway gun that apparently lived in a tunnel near Paimpol. From time to time it would emerge, fire off a few rounds and retreat into its lair. It never did any damage to the 10th DF, but there were some moments of alarm in the night watches when a fountain of water suddenly appeared nearby.

The 10th DF practised night convoy protection and interception with radar and starshell, daylight torpedo-firing, towing and AA gunnery exercises. These manoeuvres were mixed in with the real thing; 'Tunnel' sweeps against enemy convoys, and 'Hostile' operations to cover minelaying. They left at dusk, fought a night action and returned to Plymouth at dawn. After spending all day repairing and replenishing, they would be slipping out of Plymouth Sound again that night. Sometimes a couple of ships would need longer repairs, sometimes a couple would be detached on some other task, but every night some ship of the 10th DF was out.

It was rumoured that the Wrens at Plymouth thought most highly of the Canadian ships – they had good food like the USN and good drinks like the RN – but they loved them all. The Wrens at Longroom Signal Station even made up a poem about The Fighting Tenth.

There are specks on the horizon
As familiar as can be
D10 with his flotilla
Proceeding in from sea.

Battle ensigns at all mastheads
An impressive sight to see
The *Tartar* with the 10th DF
Come in triumphantly.

The pendants now come visible
Four Three, Five One, Two Four,
Tartar, *Ashanti*, *Huron*,
Astern there loom five more.

Blyskawica, Javelin, Haida,
Piorun, Eskimo,
Buntings on the signal bridge,
Stokers down below.

Proceeding through the gate at last
They move more cautiously
The same old signal flying
Act Independently.

We hope we'll always see you
(Not calling pendant Three)
The Fighting Tenth's a lovely sight
When coming in from sea.

On 19/20th January, *Ashanti*, *Haida*, *Iroquois*, *Athabaskan* and three Hunts carried out the first 'Tunnel', but nothing moved. They then spent several days exercising, cleaning boilers and escorting coastal convoys. The next Tunnel sweep on 2/3rd February was equally uneventful for *Tartar*, *Ashanti*, *Haida* and *Iroquois*. Then while *Haida*, *Iroquois* and *Athabaskan* went to Scapa Flow for a week, the others continued exercises and Tunnels. On the 1/2nd March, the Tribals got a radar contact on some Elbings (big German torpedo-boats). They did not follow up the contact as it was thought they were E-boats – a difficult proposition in shallow waters. On 11/12th March, *Haida* screened an assault force during amphibious exercises. On the 19th, the flotilla practised indirect bombardment and on the 24/25th there was a pre-invasion screening exercise off Slapton Sands. *Haida*, *Huron* and *Athabaskan* took part in it, and the first two were also present at gunfire support rehearsals on the 30th. On 12th April there were minesweeping exercises off the Isle of Wight. *Athabaskan* went in with the bombardment ships while *Tartar*, *Haida* and *Huron* remained with the cover force.

Ashanti was temporarily absent from these exercises helping to augment the powerful escort and cover force protecting the Russian convoys JW58 and RA581. The destroyers and Swordfish dealt with U-boats while the escort carriers' fighters shot down shadowing aircraft as they appeared. Meanwhile the fleet carriers struck at *Tirpitz* in her fiord and put her out of action. After the war it was learned that U-739 had carried out two attacks on *Ashanti*. They both missed – "The Luck of the *Ashanti*."

There was a slight alarm in the Channel on the 'Hostile' run on 22/23rd April. *Ashanti*, *Haida* and *Athabaskan* could not keep up with *Apollo* as she raced away at 40 knots to lay a minefield off the French coast. The Tribals later picked up something on radar and trained all guns on it, but it was only *Apollo* coming back and disappearing into the night. The cruiser *Black Prince* joined *Ashanti*, *Athabaskan* and *Haida* for a Tunnel on the 23/24th. Air reconnaissance had reported destroyers and E-boats in St Malo, but the sweep was uneventful.

There was another Tunnel on the 25/26th. *Black Prince*, *Ashanti*, *Haida*, *Athabaskan*

and *Huron* were fired on by shore batteries near the Ile de Bas, but the night passed quietly until 0200 when the force intercepted three or four Elbings coming out from St Malo. These ships (really small destroyers) displaced 1,294 tons and were armed with four 4.1in, four 37mm and nine 20mm guns and six torpedo tubes. It was believed they were accompanied by an E-boat but it played no part in the action.

Ashanti and *Huron* immediately opened fire with their main armament while the Germans launched their torpedoes and turned away through their own smokescreen and a minefield. *Ashanti* claimed two hits on one of them, and a running fight developed. *Black Prince* kept out of the way, firing starshell until her 'B' turret jammed and she withdrew. Thereupon *Ashanti* provided starshell for *Huron* who was leading and *Athabaskan* did the same for *Haida*. Rocks and smoke confused targets but the two leading Tribals kept firing until T29 had had enough and doubled back to try to get round her pursuers. *Haida* (whose 'B' mounting was temporarily jammed), and *Athabaskan* concentrated on her while *Huron* and *Ashanti* chased on after T24 and T27. *Haida* hit T29 amidships, aft, just below the bridge and amidships again. *Athabaskan* was also hitting her continually and they were soon joined by *Ashanti* and *Huron* who had lost their targets. By now T29 was burning white-hot in places. The Tribals were hitting her continuously with gunfire although all their torpedoes missed. As they closed in to 400 yards, to pick up survivors, a single oerlikon gunner aboard T29 swung his gun round raking all four Tribals, who retaliated by sinking T29 at once.

As they swung away, *Huron* loomed up in front of *Ashanti*, who went full ahead on one engine and full astern on the other. *Ashanti* was still slewing round when she hit *Huron* amidships. *Huron* was badly damaged but not cut in half, while *Ashanti*'s bow was split 19 feet back from her stem. Yet by 0421 all four were returning to Plymouth at 25 knots.

Ashanti's structural repairs and a boiler clean were completed on 27th May. There were final exercises, last-minute preparations, and then the 10th DF was on the Hurd Deep patrol from 2/3rd June onwards. As the troops went ashore on D-Day German destroyers were reported heading for Normandy from Brest and the Biscay ports. A U-boat hunt by some other Canadian destroyers was called off, so that they would not get in the Tribals' way, but nothing happened, so they took it in turns to go into Plymouth to refuel.

By midnight on the 8/9th, the flotilla was in two divisions off Ushant; *Tartar*, *Ashanti*, *Haida* and *Huron* near the French coast with *Eskimo*, *Javelin*, *Blyskawica* and *Piorun* farther out to sea. At 0100 *Tartar*'s radar picked up four destroyers steering east; T24 (an Elbing-class torpedo-boat), Z24 and Z32 (two Narvik-class destroyers of 2,600 tons and armed with five 5.9in, four 37mm and fourteen 20mm guns, and eight tubes) and ZH1. This last was the ex-Dutch destroyer *Gerard Callenburgh*, captured by the Germans in 1940. She displaced 1,628 tons and carried five 4.7in, four 37mm and four 20mm guns with eight tubes.

The rear two ships (Z24 and T24) immediately turned west pursued by *Haida* and *Huron*, while *Tartar* and *Ashanti* chased the other two, concentrating on ZH1.

Z32 made smoke and raced through it into the arms of the 2nd Division. She fired a salvo of torpedoes at *Blyskawica* and *Eskimo* (who was warned in time by her 'headache' operator listening to the German R/T) and dodged back into the smoke. *Eskimo* and *Javelin* also fired torpedoes. *Tartar* and *Ashanti* were hitting ZH1 hard and had set her on fire. Z32 emerged from the smoke and raced past, firing as she came. *Tartar* was hit three times and set on fire, temporarily losing communications with the flotilla. But both *Tartar* and *Ashanti* scored hits on Z32 and more on ZH1, who was now completely ablaze. *Ashanti* had also been hit by a shell, but she fired her four torpedoes. One hit ZH1's bows and one her stern. ZH1 blew up and sank.

Meanwhile *Haida* and *Huron* had been chasing Z24 and T24 to the westward. *Haida* was slightly damaged by gunfire, but both Tribals stayed with the Germans who had been damaged. Z24 and T24 fired torpedoes. All missed. Then the two Germans headed through a British minefield and it was while skirting this area that *Haida* and *Huron* lost touch.

Rejoining the flotilla leader, they challenged a vessel they thought was *Tartar* with her communications still out of action. It was Z32 trying to get back to the west and they immediately opened fire. Now Z32 was heading south-east with *Haida* and *Huron* astern. The two Tribals ceased fire and concentrated on maintaining contact with the fleeing German who gave up trying to reach Cherbourg and headed towards Morlaix. At 0300 she was trapped. Z32 was hit in the boiler-room and ran aground on the Ile de Bas. *Haida* and *Huron* closed in, set her on fire and turned away.

At dawn, the 10th DF regrouped and drove off an attack by two Ju88s. The 1st Division returned to Plymouth to refuel while the 2nd Division remained on patrol.

The Germans had decided Z32 was beyond salvage and had already blown her scuttling charges to complete her demolition. Of course this was not known in Plymouth. An air attack finished her off and then MTBs were ordered to wreck the hulk with torpedoes on 13/14th June. The operation was covered by the 10th DF, *Ashanti* and *Piorun* being posted in the Channel Islands-St Malo area.

In the early hours of the morning they encountered about nine minesweepers. They illuminated the Germans with starshell and began hitting them at once. When *Ashanti* and *Piorun* pulled away they left two stopped and ablaze, three sinking and four badly damaged. Two of them were in shallow water and apparently aground.

E-boats were the only enemy the Tribals were reluctant to deal with in those shallow, rock-infested waters. If E-boats were encountered, as on the 26/27th, near the Channel Islands, it was prudent to leave them as far astern as possible.

Ashanti and *Piorun* continued a successful partnership when they encountered three trawlers off the Channel Islands on 30th June/1st July. They sank two and damaged one. These two actions had resulted in the elimination of M83, M133 and M206 (743 tons; two 4.1in and two 37mm guns), M343, M412, M422, M424, M432, M442 and M452 (543 tons; two 4.1in and six 20mm guns) and the trawlers M4615 and V203. They were either sunk or were so badly damaged that they ran aground, were scuttled, finished off by aircraft or captured by the advancing Allied armies. *Piorun* was slightly damaged.

Then it was *Ashanti* and *Tartar*. On 4th July they engaged four landing barges inside a little harbour near Lannion until they were driven off by shore batteries.

By now the war was going badly for the Germans who had decided to withdraw the Biscay-based U-boats and evacuate key personnel from the besieged ports. The 10th DF therefore took part in Kinetic Operations which were intended to prevent such German moves.

From 31st July to 3rd August the cruisers *Bellona* and *Diadem*, the carrier *Striker*, the 10th DF (*Tartar*, *Ashanti*, *Haida*, *Huron*, *Blyskawica* and *Piorun*) and the RCN destroyers *St Laurent*, *Chaudière* and *Kootenay* patrolled from Brest to La Rochelle. They remained over the horizon during the day and closed the coast at night. They saw nothing.

On 5th August, *Bellona*, *Tartar*, *Ashanti*, *Haida* and *Iroquois* left Plymouth to patrol off St Nazaire between Belle Ile and Ile d'Yeu. At 0040 on the 6th, *Bellona* opened fire on a convoy of seven to nine ships. The Tribals joined in, immediately setting a trawler on fire. At 0044 an M-class minesweeper was fired at. Ten minutes later it had been blown up and the Tribals were shooting at a 4,000-ton merchant ship. She had been hit and set ablaze and another merchant ship was sinking as the destroyers turned and swept past the convoy again at 0104. This time a damaged coaster was sunk and a minesweeper started to go down. At 0128 they turned and swept past the convoy again, the entire force concentrating on four burning ships. After they began to sink, the force was split up to attack the scattering remnants. A trawler was destroyed and a burning M-class minesweeper sank.

At 0313 the force regrouped and moved in closer to St Nazaire. Three minutes later, they sighted three or four armed ships, but this convoy was larger than they thought. When they headed back to Plymouth two had been sunk by *Iroquois*, one by *Haida*, three by *Ashanti* and *Tartar* jointly and one had escaped. The minesweepers M263 (743 tons) and M486 (543 tons), the trawler V414 and the 217-ton coaster *Otto* were among the vessels sunk. The 1,372-ton escort vessel *Jupiter* was damaged and was finished off by aircraft the next day. She had formerly been the French seaplane-tender *Sans Pareil* and was armed with three 4.1in, four 37mm and ten 20mm guns.

During all these Plymouth operations one of *Ashanti*'s gunners had been seriously injured in the leg and three others were wounded. *Ashanti* herself was almost completely worn out. Twice she came back with two boilers shut down and empty, and with no drinking water left because it was needed to keep No. 1 boiler steaming. At sea, the engineers always kept her going; if they ever shut down to correct some minor fault, they might never get her going again.

Ashanti spent some time protecting coastal convoys between Plymouth, Falmouth and Milford Haven, but on 16th September, she arrived at Palmer's Jarrow Yard for refit. Once she was opened up her troubles were found to be very serious indeed. All auxiliary machinery was restored, the LP turbines were taken out and partly rebladed, the stern-tube and A-bracket bushes were rebored, the superheaters retubed, an additional evaporator improved water capacity and an extra diesel generator and

split-ring main boosted her electricity supply. A quarter of a million pounds was spent on her. When the refit was over her stern-tube bushes gave more trouble and she was held up again. This time she was passed over, went into reserve at Rosyth and was later laid up at Harwich. In 1948 she was used in damage control tests in Loch Striven and on 12th April 1949 she was sold for breaking up at Troon.

So passed *Ashanti*. "She was a thorough bitch from the marine engineering point of view, yet she never let us down in action." What more could be asked of a warship?

Ashanti had survived North Atlantic gales, the Norwegian Campaign, running aground, Arctic Convoys, the invasion of North Africa, U-boats, aircraft, and some of the roughest destroyer in-fighting of the Second World War.

The old witchdoctors' spells had proved stronger than the hazards of the sea and the violence of the enemy.

Commanding Officers

Cdr W. G. Davis, RN 29th November 1938 – 9th November 1940.
Cdr R. G. Onslow, RN 1st June 1941 – 12th December 1942.
Lt-Cdr J. R. Barnes, RN 13th December 1942 – 18th August 1944.
Lt-Cdr C. R. Purse, DSC, RN 19th August 1944 – 24th June 1945.

Pennant Numbers

L51 August 1938 – December 1938
F51 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G51 Autumn 1940 – April 1949

Athabaskan
was lost before
her badge
was completed.

HMCS Athabaskan

First of name

Builders: Vickers-Armstrong, High Walker Yard, The Tyne
Engined by: Parsons Marine Steam Turbine Co, Wallsend
Ordered: 5th April 1940
Laid Down: Autumn 1940 (as *Iroquois*)
Launched: 15th November 1941 (as *Athabaskan* by Lady Tweedsmuir)
Commissioned: 3rd February 1943

In September 1939, the RCN decided to order new ships to replace the older destroyers previously transferred from the RN. The RCN preferred the Tribals with their heavy gun armament, because they wanted to take the war to the enemy instead of relying on purely defensive vessels. Originally all were to be built in Canada, but this was not practicable at the time so the Admiralty agreed that the UK should build the first ones. The Admiralty also acted as agents, arranging for the Canadian Government to buy the Tribals by a system of direct instalments while Britain paid cash for the corvettes being built in Canadian yards for the RN.

The first two were laid down as *Iroquois* and *Athabaskan*, but *Iroquois* was delayed by bombing while on the stocks. *Athabaskan* was therefore renamed *Iroquois* and launched as the lead ship while the original *Iroquois* was later launched as *Athabaskan*

Athabaskan's trials and working-up at Scapa Flow were less hectic than *Iroquois'*, which had put so much strain on her crew. Exercises were practised with fewer interruptions, apart from an escort duty as far as the Clyde on 22nd to 24th February 1943. *Athabaskan* also had to visit Greenock from 11th to 21st March for repairs to hull damage received when she berthed alongside the Danish oiler *Danmark*.

Athabaskan's first mission began on 29th March, when she and *Bermuda* were sent to patrol the Iceland–Faeroes passage to intercept blockade runners trying to reach Germany. The weather was so bad that the cruiser lost a man overboard, while even at 12 knots *Athabaskan* suffered hull damage and had two compartments flooded. They arrived back at Scapa Flow on 2nd April. *Athabaskan* was then drydocked at South Shields for hull repairs and strengthening. Completed on 17th May, *Athabaskan* then needed further working-up at Scapa Flow.

At the end of May, *Athabaskan* joined Force R (*Cumberland*, *Bermuda* and *Eclipse*) at Greenock for Operation Gearbox III, the relief of the Spitsbergen garrison. They were covered by *Furious*, *Scylla*, *Echo* and *Middleton*, and all ships left the Clyde on the 31st. *Furious* flew off so many training sorties, that *Athabaskan* had to help escort her into Hvalfiord to fuel and then went on to rejoin Force R waiting at Akureyri for suitable weather. While the covering ships stayed in the background, Force R left

Akureyri on 7th June. *Athabaskan* investigated two asdic contacts off Jan Mayen, but otherwise the journey was uneventful.

On the morning of the 10th, the destroyers checked that the Spitsbergen fiords were empty of enemy warships and the cruisers entered Isfiord at 1300. *Cumberland* and *Bermuda* took it in turns to disembark their troops and stores at Barentsburg, while *Bermuda*'s seaplane and the destroyers kept watch off the fiords. Twelve hours later the changeover was complete and Force R's return voyage was veiled in thick fog.

On the 18th, four days after arriving back at Scapa Flow, *Athabaskan* went out for torpedo exercises with *Dido*. She was returning alone when she collided with the boom defence vessel *Bargate* at the Switha Gate. *Athabaskan*'s stern-bar was distorted and her bow plates on both sides needed repair, so, after being temporarily patched up at Scapa, she was sent to Devonport for drydocking.

While this work was being carried out, the Admiralty and Coastal Command had instituted a series of hunter-killer patrols in the Bay of Biscay to deal with surfaced U-boats en route to their patrol areas.

Athabaskan, *Iroquois* and the Polish destroyer *Orkan* (joined later for just one day by *Glasgow*) left Plymouth to undertake such a patrol on 19th July. On the evening of 21st July *Iroquois* sighted the Spanish fishing vessel *Monolo*. For some time it had been believed that these craft, although neutral, were reporting Allied movements. So several months earlier the Admiralty had announced the establishment of prohibited areas in which all ships would be sunk regardless of nationality or trade. *Iroquois* therefore took off *Monolo*'s crew and sank her with gunfire. The next morning *Isolina Costrade* was similarly sunk by *Iroquois*, while *Orkan* dealt with *Vivero*. Later the three destroyers found another fifteen Spanish fishing boats, but these were in a recognised area and were therefore left undisturbed.

On the 23rd, *Orkan* drove off a patrolling Fw200 and the little force set course for home the next day. That afternoon a Sunderland guided them to a liferaft and *Athabaskan* picked up five survivors from U-558 sunk by a US aircraft on 20th July. In the early hours of the 25th, *Orkan* picked up 37 survivors from U-459 and then searched for the crew of the Wellington shot down during the attack. *Iroquois* found the tail gunner in his rubber dinghy three miles away. There were no others and the destroyers headed for Plymouth.

During the next sweep from 1st to 7th August, *Athabaskan* and *Grenville* helped two escort groups search for two German destroyers and a U-boat. There were two more Biscay sweeps before 24th August. During one of them there was a brief flurry of action when *Glasgow* drove off a shadowing aircraft.

On the 25th, *Athabaskan* and *Grenville* left Plymouth again. The next day they investigated six tunny boats and drove off four Ju88s. At 0400 on the 27th, they met *Rother*, *Jed* and *Egret* and the five ships began a wide sweep across the Bay of Biscay.

By now the Germans were finding that these patrols were having a serious effect on their U-boat operations. The Luftwaffe was ordered to regain command of the

Bay of Biscay. They were already shadowing *Egret*'s group. About midday sixteen Do217s appeared, each carrying one Hs293. These radio-controlled missiles had a warhead of 6½cwt and a speed of 375 mph.

One Hs293 hit *Egret*, who immediately blew up. Several nearmissed *Rother*. Five Do217s headed for *Athabaskan*, three launching their missiles simultaneously. One nearmissed astern. One skimmed the bridge and nearmissed to starboard. The third hit the port side at the join of 'B' gundeck and the wheelhouse, flew straight through the CPOs' mess, out through the other side of the ship and blew up eight feet to starboard. Flying debris slashed holes in the hull and adjacent compartments not touched by the missile itself. 'B' mounting's cordite exploded. Both forward magazines, the torpedo mess and No. 1 boiler room were flooded. The signals office was wrecked, all the lights went out and all the electrical gear in and forward of the boiler rooms went dead. The central fire control, radar communications, asdic and 'B' mounting were out of action. Four men were killed, thirty-six wounded and one had been blown overboard. *Athabaskan* stopped dead in the water, on fire and listing to starboard. But her after guns did not stop firing and they kept off the other two bombers who tried to follow up their leaders' success. Four minutes later the forward guns started firing again as well. Altogether the group succeeded in shooting down two Do217s and damaging a third. By 1330 the Germans had gone. *Rother*, *Grenville* and *Jed* picked up *Egret*'s survivors and then closed *Athabaskan* to help get her fires out. By 1445 *Athabaskan* was under way at 15 knots.

The rest of the group were ordered to continue their patrol. Commander Miles was given the alternative of heading for the nearest Allied port, Gibraltar, but he was determined to get his ship back to Plymouth. The *Egret* survivors were therefore transferred to *Athabaskan*.

On the 28th, *Athabaskan* was making 14 knots, but sea water had got into her fuel oil tanks and she often stopped altogether. Once she was stopped for an hour within sight of a British convoy – rather worrying at first because it could not be identified. The next day the sea got up and the messdecks were awash. Fuel oil now contaminated drinking water, so food and drink were scarce. *Athabaskan*'s port tanks were flooded in an attempt to lift the damaged starboard side as clear of the water as possible. She could make 12 knots but stopped twice again that day. On the 30th, *Athabaskan* was joined by *Goathland*, *Limbourne* and *Tanatside*. Commander Miles refused a tow until he was actually in Plymouth Sound after romping home at 17–18 knots for the last six hours.

Besides repairing all the damage, *Athabaskan* had a new lattice foremast fitted and the latest Type 276 radar was installed, as well as other improvements. Her first operation after leaving Devonport Dockyard was to go out to meet the battlecruiser *Renown* on 10th November. Unfortunately the rough weather she encountered strained her hull and she had to be docked again for more repairs. It was not until 10th December that *Athabaskan* arrived at Scapa Flow.

She was just in time to join *Ashanti* on escorting JW55A to Russia arriving back on New Year's Eve. *Athabaskan* began 1944 with a week in the floating dock at Scapa

Flow and then left on 8th January with *Ashanti* again. The two ships went to the Azores and then arrived at Plymouth where the 10th DF was forming.

After a couple of weeks of exercises and sweeps, *Haida*, *Athabaskan* and *Iroquois* arrived back at Scapa Flow on 5/6th February. The three Tribals were needed to augment the fleet escort around *Furious* while she carried out an air strike against Norwegian coastal shipping. Operation Posthorn lasted from 10th to 12th February and then the three Canadians returned to Plymouth Command. *Athabaskan* shared in the 10th DF's exercises and operations including the destruction of T29 and the damaging of T27 and T24 on 25/26th April.

With the rest of the flotilla repairing, *Haida* and *Athabaskan* had to go out alone the next night. They covered amphibious exercises in the next area. Nothing happened, although the following night, when they were resting in harbour, E-boats got into the convoy of LSTs and sank two.

Haida and *Athabaskan* were still operating alone when they left Plymouth on the evening of the 28th, to cover coastal forces laying a minefield twenty miles off the Ile de Bas. Intelligence reports indicated that T27 and T24 who had been hiding in Morlaix since the 25/26th, might this night try to reach Brest for repairs. About midnight, Plymouth Command shore radar picked up two contacts off the coast of Brittany, in exceptional radar conditions. The Elbings were on the move.

At 0412, *Haida* fired starshell and the enemy swung away firing twelve torpedoes. Nine ran wild but three ran true. They arrived five minutes later.

One hit *Athabaskan* in the gearing room. 'Y' mounting collapsed, the steering gear broke down and fire engulfed her stern. The after pumps were out of action and could not deal with the flames. Still she was not sunk yet. Momentarily shielded by *Haida*'s smokescreen, *Athabaskan*'s crew rigged for towing and manhandled a 70-ton capacity pump aft. But before hoses could be played on the blaze, the 4in magazine blew up. *Athabaskan* upended and went down by the stern at 0442.

Meanwhile *Haida* was chasing T27 and T24, her guns hitting both torpedo boats and forcing them to split up. *Haida* kept on after T27. The German was hit again and a fire spread rapidly. A magazine blew up. Out of control, T27 ran fast aground on a ledge off the Ile de Vierge. After further hits on T27 and the rocks around her Commander DeWolf was satisfied that the Elbing was out of action at 0435. (On 6/7th May, the wreck was finally demolished by an MTB's torpedo.) *Haida* then turned back to search for *Athabaskan*.

By 0450, *Haida* was dropping lifebuoys and carley floats and helping oil-soaked survivors up the scrambling nets. An empty lifeboat was lowered, and so too was a motor-boat, even though the engine had been knocked out by enemy gunfire. After ten minutes Commander DeWolf passed the word that *Haida* would be going ahead in five minutes. He had stayed as long as he dared, in spite of Lieutenant-Commander Stubbs' pleas for *Haida* to stand clear and get away. It was getting light, the French coast was only five miles away. Commander DeWolf's warning was repeated at one-minute intervals. *Haida* had now taken aboard forty-two seriously wounded men,

then she went ahead. As *Haida* gathered speed her wash swept two of her own men off the scrambling net into the sea.

Haida also left behind her motor-boat and its crew of three. Undaunted by the sight of their parent ship disappearing over the horizon, they picked up six more *Athabaskan* survivors plus their own two shipmates who had been swept off the net. T24 and two German minesweepers approached the scene, picking up eighty-three men, many owing their lives to the newly-issued type of RCN lifejacket. The German vessels then tried to recover *Haida*'s motor-boat, but her crew got the engine going and headed for England a hundred miles to the north. The Germans let them go.

They were unmolested by a couple of Me109s and then two Spitfires arrived overhead. They were relieved by two more and a Lancaster. At 2200 an ASRL picked them up and took them to Penzance, while a Fairmile ML towed the motor-boat to Falmouth.

Haida had arrived in Plymouth to a sad triumph long before. Her wearied crew were faced with the exhausting job of replenishing, refuelling, reammunitioning and repairing ready for the next night's patrol. The work was done for them by volunteer parties from *Huron*, herself undergoing a longer and somewhat more leisurely refit.

Over on the far side of the Channel, Lieutenant-Commander Stubbs and 127 of his men were missing. Over 80 bodies were washed up near Plouescat and were buried there. The local villagers protested at the callous way the Germans treated the Canadian dead. The German authorities took exception to this criticism and 75 Bretons were arrested and marched off to forced labour camps. Only 50 returned.

Commanding Officers

Cdr G. R. Miles, OBE, RCN 3rd February 1943 – 5th November 1943.
Lt-Cdr J. H. Stubbs, DSO, RCN 6th November 1943 – 29th April 1944.

Pennant Numbers

G07 December 1942 – April 1944

HMCS *Athabaskan*

Second of name

Builders: Halifax Shipyards
Engined by: John Inglis, Halifax
Ordered: 1942
Laid Down: 15th May 1943
Launched: 4th May 1946 (by Mrs J. Hamilton Stubbs)
Commissioned: 20th January 1948

Although Canada had decided to construct four Tribals herself during the war, her own yards were kept busy building urgently needed escort vessels, and repairing warships and merchantmen. There was also a shortage of technical equipment which had to be brought over from the UK. As a result, not one of the Canadian-built Tribals saw service during the Second World War.

Athabaskan was the last Tribal to be completed. The main part of her crew arrived from British Columbia. They carried out all the various trials and sailed for their appointed station on the West Coast on 15th May 1948.

Athabaskan's voyage via the West Indies, the Panama Canal and the Pacific was saddened by an outbreak of poliomyelitis on board. One man died and was buried at sea. On arrival at Esquimalt on 29th June, *Athabaskan* had to be quarantined until the disease stopped spreading.

Athabaskan's days were spent with *Cayuga* and other RCN ships exercising and showing the flag along the Pacific shores of Canada and the USA. In August, they carried out a night shadowing exercise with *Sheffield*, sent bluejackets ashore on Queen Charlotte Island and provided decorated floats for a carnival at Prince Rupert. After *Athabaskan*'s drydocking in September, she left Esquimalt on 11th October with *Ontario*, *Cayuga*, *Crescent* and *Antigonish* for sixteen days at Pearl Harbor. While *Athabaskan* was fuelling from *Ontario* on the outward passage, a connection broke, spraying oil all over *Athabaskan*'s fo'c'sle and the people there. A similar incident occurred aboard *Cayuga* on the return voyage – the only material setbacks during 300 exercises. Unfortunately Commander Davis fell ill and had to be relieved by Lieutenant-Commander Davidson from *Ontario*. Back at Esquimalt *Athabaskan* suffered several buckled plates when a fire tug bumped into her on 24th November.

1949 began with West Coast ships visiting San Diego and Acapulco (for the Mardi Gras carnival). Then they passed through the Panama Canal for joint RCN-RN-USN exercises in the Caribbean. *Haida*, *Nootka* and *Magnificent* had come south from Halifax to take part, and *Athabaskan*'s whaler picked up a Firefly pilot who had ditched during a flight from the carrier. The cruise lasted from 28th January to

28th April. After docking at Esquimalt in May, *Athabaskan* spent the summer visiting ports and harbours from California to Alaska.

On 15th September, *Athabaskan* began a comprehensive refit. Two squid triple-barrelled depth-charge mortars were fitted in place of 'Y' mounting. The asdic control room and the action information centre were enlarged and electronic gear installed to link the squid directly to the submarine detection instruments. The two depth-charge throwers were removed but the depth-charge chute was retained. Her complement was now 278. When completed on 13th March 1950, it was intended that *Athabaskan* should concentrate on training personnel in the basic use of equipment, while the other ships on the West Coast got on with their more complicated exercises. *Athabaskan*'s work did involve cruises and goodwill visits, but in June, this programme was interrupted by preparations for a cruise in European waters with the Canadian Special Service Squadron.

On the 30th, the European cruise itself was cancelled. Instead Project Three Ships West prepared *Cayuga*, *Athabaskan* and *Sioux* for service in Korean waters. Five days previously the North Korean army had crossed the 38th Parallel. The United Nations had condemned this aggression and resolved to furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea. Canada supported the UN and the three destroyers were her first contribution.

At 1500 on 5th July, *Ontario* led *Cayuga*, *Athabaskan* and *Sioux* out of Esquimalt. The destroyers topped up their tanks from the cruiser on the 7th and made for Pearl Harbor, while *Ontario* returned to Canada. After calling at Pearl Harbor, Kwajalein and Guam, they arrived at Sasebo at 1530 on the 30th.

Twenty-three hours later *Athabaskan* was leaving on her first assignment. The North Koreans had pushed the ROK troops into a defensive perimeter around the vital port of Pusan. Troopships, freighters and tankers had to be escorted between Japan and Pusan to maintain this foothold in Korea. *Athabaskan* escorted single ships on this route until 12th August when she sailed from Sasebo with the carrier *Triumph* and other ships for service on the West Coast of Korea. This was *Athabaskan*'s introduction to the Windchasers' Club. Such screening usually involved constant changes in course and speed, conforming with the carrier's movements while operating her aircraft. There were no air or submarine attacks but the destroyers always had to be ready for them.

After air strikes against Inchon, Kunsan and Mokpo, *Athabaskan* and *Consort* screened *Jamaica*'s bombardment of Kunsan on 15th August. *Athabaskan* was then left alone off Kunsan to prevent the Communists moving reinforcements and supplies around the coast by sea. She intercepted four junks off Kunsan and sent them to Ochon-to for investigation, following them later for a conference on the island. Commander Welland left equipment and electricians to help the ROKN repair their vessels and then *Athabaskan* investigated reported enemy activity off the Kokunsan Islands. After picking up her electricians, she spent the night anchored close inshore south of the Kokunsans, sending two boats to patrol along the beach.

At dawn on the 16th, *Athabaskan* fired fifty-eight 4in shells at the reported position of four 120mm guns but there was no reply. She followed that up with twenty-five

4in shells at a suspected observation post in the village of Taechon. A patrol among the offshore islands, produced one refugee junk. After an afternoon conference with the ROKN, *Athabaskan* anchored south of Ui-to for the night, while her boats patrolled inshore.

After a dawn bombardment of a reported North Korean headquarters at Popsong'po with no visible results, *Athabaskan* moved northwards firing her guns at reported machine-gun posts. *Athabaskan* fuelled from *Wave Prince*, transferred her patrol notes to *Sioux*, and then headed north for Inchon with *Kenya*.

That night it was decided that certain islands off Inchon must be captured before the planned assault on the port itself could take place. At 0600 on the 18th, *Athabaskan* fired ninety-four 4in shells at a headquarters in the village of Supo on Tokchok-to. An hour later Commander Welland sent a small party ashore to help the ROKN forces and to treat numerous civilian casualties. By evening the island had been secured. The next day more civilian wounded were cared for and further instruction on the use of submachine guns given to ROKN personnel.

After a night's uneventful patrol, *Athabaskan* supported ROK marines landing on Ryanku on the 20th. She first fired starshell and high-explosive into the outskirts of five villages to panic civilians into the hills and thus disrupt communications. Meanwhile, *Athabaskan*'s motor-boat, aided by a couple of judicious 4in shells, captured two sailing junks. *Athabaskan* then shelled a radio-reporting station on the islet of P'almi-do and later sent a party ashore to demolish it altogether. That afternoon *Athabaskan* spent three hours treating civilian wounded on Ryanku. The next day *Athabaskan* was relieved of these duties. She did another escort job and then returned to Sasebo to replenish.

From 4th to 10th September, *Athabaskan* was again employed on escort duty. She first took *Wave Prince* to refuel Yellow Sea task forces and then screened *Triumph* during air strikes prior to the Inchon landings. In this task *Athabaskan* was accompanied by the Australian Tribals *Bataan* and *Warramunga*.

Athabaskan's departure from Sasebo on the 13th, after fuelling and ammunitioning, was delayed by the typhoon Kezia, but presently she met the Inchon invasion fleet, one section of three tankers being screened by *Cayuga* and *Sioux*.

Athabaskan, *Bataan*, *Cayuga* and *Warramunga* were among the ships assigned to the covering forces during the Inchon landing which would strike directly at Seoul. Their primary mission was to prevent enemy submarines from interfering with the landing but they carried out a few bombardment and escort duties and also continued their blockade of the coast. Most of their tasks were monotonous and routine. *Cayuga*'s crew had already suffered from sores, boils and swollen ankles because of the heat. Now frequent bombardments shook free glass wool insulation used for winterisation. Dropping into bunks and clothes it caused unpleasant skin irritations.

On the whole, warships of the British Commonwealth were preferred for operations in the Yellow Sea where vessels might possibly get involved with the Chinese. Unlike the USA, the Commonwealth recognised Communist China, so any such incident could be settled diplomatically.

The four Tribals got to know each other quite well. Once *Athabaskan* provided ice-cream for *Warramunga* when the two ships were in company for a long period. After a while the crews swapped yarns and often ate and sometimes slept aboard each other's ship. *Warramunga* wore her commissioning pennant from the tail of a brass kangaroo at the masthead. Not to be outdone, *Athabaskan* had a (larger) brass beaver fitted for the same purpose at her masthead. The two ships became quite inseparable. Once *Athabaskan*'s nickname had been *Athabee*; now the two Tribals were known as *Athamunga* and *Warrabaskan*.

About this time too, Esther Williams began her travels between the patrolling destroyers. In September 1945, *HMAS Nepal* had given *Bataan* a framed photograph of the filmstar. Five years later, off Korea, this unofficial mascot became the target for raiding parties from other destroyers. Almost every West Coast destroyer acquired Esther Williams at some time or other.

On 20th September, *Athabaskan* joined *Cayuga* and the ROK vessels PC704, AMS506 and AMS507 who had been blockading the Kunsan area. Captain Brock had already begun attempts to alleviate the condition of the Korean islanders. Many were starving because there were no supplies of rice from the mainland and the blockade forbade any fishing. The Tribals landed small quantities of food for children, the old and the sick. Their crews often cut their rations to send food ashore. Captain Brock also set up a temporary fishing sanctuary. Later, when Operation Comeback was put on an official footing, the fishing sanctuary's position was signalled to all forces and much larger quantities of food and medical supplies were distributed. Once *Warramunga* arrived with two tons of rice. The islanders felt that they had to reply with gifts of their own and sent bowls of flowers out to the destroyers.

On the 21st, Captain Brock planned an attack on road bridges in Beijaa Bay. AMS507 sent an ROK party ashore but they were driven off and the bridges later destroyed by air attack. Next day *Athabaskan* and *Cayuga* shelled targets around the bay until the evening when *Cayuga* developed a feed-water defect. The salinity content of her boilers rose dangerously, so she returned to Sasebo. *Athabaskan* therefore attached herself to *Horace A. Bass* and supported the destroyer-transport when she sent a raiding party ashore.

On the 23rd, *Athabaskan* and PC704 shelled gun emplacements, observation posts, ten warehouses (full of troops and supplies) and two motor-junks in Poryon-Po Bay. Two days later *Athabaskan*, PC704 and AMS506 assaulted Puin-to and Youjiku-to. *Athabaskan*'s motor-cutters soon found there were only peasants on Puin-to, but the ROK troops ran into machine-gun fire on the other island. They withdrew with three casualties who were treated aboard *Athabaskan*. They also brought with them a little girl who had been wounded. She later died and was buried at sea.

PC704 had seen a mine outside Kunsan, so the next morning *Athabaskan* sent boats into the shallow water to mark one mine with a danbuoy so that it could be recovered later and examined by experts. Another was sunk by 40mm fire and two more were plotted but could not be destroyed. Sonar echoes showed that there were others covered even at lowtide. In the morning a boat party was sent inshore to fix a

demolition charge to each mine, light the fuse and row away until the mine blew up. In this Operation Woomph, four mines were thus destroyed. In the afternoon, *Bataan* joined to help bombard Youjiku-to because several hundred Communist troops had been reported on the island.

After a night patrol off the islands, *Athabaskan*'s and *Bataan*'s boats destroyed four more mines in the Kunsan minefields. In the afternoon of the 28th, they shelled hideouts in Beijaa Bay and then fired a 4in salvo in the general direction of Pechanko-to to frighten and disturb peasants digging trenches on the island. A night search for junks off Ammin-to yielded nothing. *Athabaskan* was relieved by *Warramunga* and then went to Sasebo where she arrived on the 30th.

By now the North Koreans were in full retreat across the 38th Parallel. General MacArthur was determined to wipe out the Communist forces and he therefore planned an amphibious landing at Wonsan on the east coast of Korea to cut off their retreat. As the force had to be representative of all the United Nations, *Athabaskan* and *Warramunga* took part on behalf of Canada and Australia. The actual landing was an anti-climax. Held up by minefields for six days the assault troops went ashore and were greeted by Bob Hope – advancing ground troops had captured the port a fortnight before.

The destroyers screened the big ships during a heavy bombardment of Chongjin on 12th October. *Warramunga* received minor shrapnel damage from a coastal battery so she later returned with *USS Doyle* to carry out a personal saturation of the offending area. Meanwhile *Athabaskan* was using her sonar to detect mines as she led the cruisers *Worcester* and *Ceylon* into position to bombard Songjin. One floating mine was hit and sunk by 40mm fire. From 14th October to 2nd November *Athabaskan* carried out fleet screening duties, twice firing squid bombs at shoals of fish. She then acted as fleet courier, delivering passengers and mail to ships and shore bases on the east coast before escorting *Missouri* to Sasebo.

On 5th November, *Cayuga* and *Athabaskan* sailed from Sasebo for Hong Kong. En route they ran into typhoon Clara in the South China Sea. Both ships were slightly damaged, *Athabaskan*'s chaplain was injured and one man was washed overboard, but soon picked up. Next day they arrived at Hong Kong for repairs, routine maintenance and leave. Presently joined by *Sioux*, they held a memorial service for Canadians buried in Saiwan Cemetery.

When their leave period was over they learned that the Chinese Communists were intervening in force, so the Canadians would not now be returning home. Instead they were sent to the Yalu Gulf to intercept Communist junks believed to be supplying their armies in the Korean Peninsula. From 21st November to 3rd December, *Cayuga*, *Athabaskan*, *Bataan*, *Warramunga*, *Sioux* and *Forrest Royal* only succeeded in finding refugee and fishing junks. They also assisted ships in the approaches to Inchon and Chinnampo. *Athabaskan* herself was having trouble with her engines, probably as a result of fouling the port propeller off Chinnampo. A diver reported that the propeller was clear and the A-brackets were sound, so she continued on patrol.

On 4th December, the destroyers were ordered to concentrate off the Daido-Ko,

to cover the evacuation from Chinnampo, now being threatened by the Chinese advance. The force headed through heavy seas and snowstorms, and arrived off Chodo at 2200. Having previously operated in the Taedong River (*Warramunga*'s crew had helped to organise mine clearance there) they realised the hazards of the channel up to Chinnampo. Even if the tortuous 40-mile channel was not changed overnight by 32-foot tides and strong currents, it was only 600 yards wide, marked by unlit buoys and bordered by mudbanks and minefields. Their decision to wait for dawn before attempting the passage was overruled by alarmist signals from Chinnampo. The destroyers therefore headed up the channel at night, the first time this had been done.

Warramunga went first and ran aground. Then *Cayuga* led in *Athabaskan*, *Bataan*, *Forrest Royal* and *Sioux* at one-mile intervals and each navigating independently. *Sioux* ran aground, got off, entangled a screw in a buoy cable. Once free again she was ordered to return with *Warramunga* and join *Ceylon* off Chodo, where they would cover the transports emerging from the Taedong estuary.

After a hazardous journey (*Athabaskan*'s navigating officer took 189 fixes, mainly on radar, during the four-hour passage) they arrived at a peaceful and serene Chinnampo. There was no emergency and the destroyers had to wait for a breakfast conference to get some idea of the situation.

During the 5th the evacuation by transport, LST and junk proceeded. Messages for junks without radios, were wrapped around potatoes and thrown across. Not all the transports would be able to clear the channel before dark so *Athabaskan* established a safe anchorage just down river from Chinnampo. She destroyed three pill-boxes with 4in gunfire and sent away her boats to examine refugee junks in case they were being used for minelaying. After the last transports had left, *Cayuga*, *Bataan* and *Forrest Royal* bombarded marshalling yards, oil tanks, freight cars, radio stations and other installations that Army engineers had not had time to demolish. Civilian junks were not touched, but two Koreans were injured by ricochets when *Forrest Royal*'s shells hit a stone building.

That night they all sheltered in *Athabaskan*'s anchorage and at dawn sailed for the open sea. The destroyers returned to patrol duties, convoy escort, carrier screening, shore bombardments and AA support at Inchon – all in snow squalls and bitter weather. Commander Welland also sent supplies ashore to a lighthouse keeper, the boat returning with Christmas trees. On the 22nd *Athabaskan* arrived at Sasebo for a refit and was thus able to spend Christmas in harbour. The other destroyers were not so fortunate over Christmas and the New Year. On the 29th, *Ceylon*, *Rochester*, *Bataan* and *Warramunga* supported the army on the Kumpo Peninsula. Two days later the Chinese broke through and Inchon had to be evacuated.

Cayuga had been lying at anchor off Inchon from 9th to 21st December ready to repel any attack on the evacuation force gathered there. She then alternated between coastal patrols and screening *Theseus* before returning to Sasebo on 8th January 1951.

Athabaskan completed her refit on 5th January and spent most of that month forcing her way through cake ice on inshore patrol. In February, she had six days' repairs

at Kure and five days of anti-submarine exercises with *St Bride's Bay* and *Bugara*.

Although there were some inshore freelance patrols, *Athabaskan*, *Cayuga* and *Nootka* screened *Theseus* for most of February and March. This was the season of 'The Yellow Sea Refuelling Stakes' timed from firing the Coston gun line to the order "Commence Pumping". In that time a messenger had to be bent onto the gunline to haul the oil hose across to be connected up. The time came down from 8 minutes to 1 minute 40 seconds, *Athabaskan* holding the world record.

In April, *Athabaskan* and *Huron* went round to the east coast where *Theseus* was striking at the Wonsan area after its evacuation. *USS Bataan* had been operating there in March and continued to do so. The American carrier was being screened by *HMAS Bataan*, now usually known as Junior. There were of course quite a number of signals about the firm of Bataan & Son.

Later in the month *Athabaskan* and *Huron* returned to the west coast to join *Nootka* and *Warramunga* screening *Glory*. *Huron* searched unsuccessfully for a missing Sea Fury pilot and they came under *Belfast*'s orders for blockade work. Once *Huron* stopped a suspicious junk, but it was only a fisherman outside his proper area. That was on 1/2nd May. At dawn *Athabaskan* was relieved for refit, called at Japan and the Aleutians and was home at Esquimalt on 17th May.

Athabaskan was back screening carriers on the West coast of Korea in September. By now the stalemate of the land campaign was reflected at sea by the continual carrier strikes at Communist communications. This period also marked the beginning of the island campaign. Both sides tried to seize and hold as many offshore islands large and small, as they could, to pressurise their opponents at the Kaesong-Panmunjom truce talks. These islands were usually held by guerrilla forces organised by an American officer stationed on Pengyong-do and codenamed Leopard. His local representatives were known as Donkeys.

Athabaskan was introduced to island guerrilla warfare on 27th September when Rear-Admiral Creery (C-in-C Canadian Pacific Coast) was on the bridge. The destroyer was returning from a mainland bombardment when she was fired on by the near-by island of Sok-to. It was supposed to be friendly, but there was always the possibility that these islands could change hands during the night. *Athabaskan* therefore replied with 40mm fire until ordered to desist.

Athabaskan spent part of October screening carriers and tried unsuccessfully to rescue a Corsair pilot after he had ditched on take-off. On the 14th, *Belfast*, *Unicorn* and *Athabaskan* were hit by typhoon Ruth in the South China Sea. They got into the safe semi-circle, but winds still reached 70 mph and the waves were 40 feet high. It was impossible to relieve those on watch. *Athabaskan*'s starboard motor-cutter was stove in, a carley float swept away and two people were injured.

In November, *Athabaskan* was transferred to the inshore group. The HDWS-Sperry radar of the RCN destroyers was apparently the best available. The Tribals were particularly suited for inshore work as they could locate small craft among the islands in the dark.

On 30th October, *Cayuga* had anchored off Sok-to to fire at a reported battery on

top of the Amgak Peninsula. She had fired 155 4in shells with no result, when the battery opened fire. Over a hundred 76mm and 105mm shells dropped accurately around *Cayuga*. The nearest was only 60 feet away. *Cayuga* slipped her cable and withdrew stern-first, towing under, and losing, her motor-cutter in the process.

This Amgak battery was still bothering coastal junks when *Athabaskan* arrived on the scene on 15th November. After a preliminary bombardment a trap was planned for the Communist artillerymen the next day.

At dawn *Athabaskan* shelled the village of Mumbongchon and then a beached junk near Amgak. It was hoped that the 76mm guns would fire at *Athabaskan* thus revealing their position to *Belfast*'s guns and *Sydney*'s aircraft, waiting in ambush beyond Sok-to. Perhaps spies warned the battery commander of the big ships' presence, or perhaps the guns were mobile ones. In any case, there was no reply, so the air-gun bombardment was carried out on the suspected position, just in case the guns were still there.

Athabaskan and *Cayuga* then became concerned with Taewha-do, a small island (precariously held by the ROK) close to the Yalu River. The associated operations usually involved a daily visit to Pengyong-do, the Leopard guerrilla headquarters. They also had to be fitted in with carrier escort duties.

On the afternoon of 6th November, *Athabaskan* embarked arms and stores from *Belfast* and delivered them to Taewha-do just after an air raid on the island. After shelling Ka-do, she embarked the Donkey leader and took him to Leopard head-quarters on Pengyong-do. *Athabaskan* returned to Taewha-do on the 7/8th with arms and the Donkey leader. Covered by *Cayuga* she embarked 47 casualties and took them to Inchon.

Cayuga then spent some time screening the Yellow Sea carriers and returned that night, 8/9th, to Taewha-do, shelling troop concentrations on Tan-do and Ka-do. *Athabaskan* should have had a quiet night at Pengyong-do, but a B-29 crashed and burned on the island, so *Athabaskan* had to send her medical officer ashore to treat eleven survivors.

Before rejoining the Yellow Sea carriers *Cayuga* reported to *Belfast* at Pengyong-do. It certainly seemed that the Communists were preparing to assault Taewha-do. Accordingly, *Belfast* and *Athabaskan* shelled Tan-do and Ka-do on the 9/10th, producing a display of searchlights and AA fire from the islands. On the 10th *Athabaskan* shelled targets along the Choppeki Peninsula and a battery on Wolsa-Ri. She ferried guerrilla reinforcements to Taewha-do that night, shelled Tan-do and Ka-do to disperse *Communist* troops and returned to Pengyong-do. Until the 14th *Athabaskan* carried out these nightly bombardments and generally encouraged the Taewha-do guerrillas, while patrolling the Yalu Gulf by day. After six days with the carrier forces, *Athabaskan* replenished at Sasebo and did not return to Pengyong-do until the 27th.

Meanwhile *Cayuga* had been busy on *Athabaskan*'s beat. After the emergency of 18th November when *Cayuga*'s dog Alice fell overboard during fuelling and had to be rescued, *Cayuga* went to Taewha-do. She shelled Uri-do where a troop con-

centration had been reported. The bombardment was controlled by the Donkey leader's very old motor-junk, known as the 'Royal Taewhadian Navy'. After six shells the Donkey's radio broke down and the rest of the bombardment had to be called off. Gales forced the cancellation of the rest of the Taewha-do patrol and *Cayuga* returned to Pengyong-do. While alongside a catamaran, two rivets gave way on the waterline and *Cayuga* now had a leak in an oil fuel tank.

On the 24th, *Cayuga* provided gunfire support for Sok-to guerrillas who were trying to destroy a 76mm battery on Wolsa-Ri. After they had withdrawn, *Cayuga* and the destroyer escort *Edmonds* covered the landing and withdrawal of Taewha-do guerrillas during a night raid on Ka-do. *Cayuga* called at Pengyong-do and arrived at Sasebo on the 26th.

Athabaskan spent 27/28th November searching unsuccessfully for a man overboard. She and *Edmonds* then shelled troop positions on Wolsa-Ri. On the evening of the 30th, *Athabaskan* was patrolling Korea Bay when news arrived of the Communist invasion of Taewha-do. At 0650 on 1st December 1951 *Ceylon* and *Athabaskan* arrived off Taewha-do. The destroyers closed the smoking island to investigate. She could see small bands of troops hunting down fugitives. There were also refugee junks and the wreckage of the Donkey's motor-junk, and two Korean refugees on islets waving for help. As one of them paddled out in a little skiff, an unseen shore battery opened fire. Inaccurate at first, shells straddled *Athabaskan* as the Korean came aboard and the destroyer steamed away. That night *Athabaskan*'s motor-cutter searched in vain for more survivors of the Communist attack on the islets around Taewha-do. The next day *Athabaskan* resumed her carrier escort duties.

The immediate result of the loss of Taewha-do was that such offshore islands now got top priority for air support, supplies and reinforcements. The UN high command decided that these islands must be held, not only for their intrinsic value, but to protect inshore channels and to act as bases for guerrilla raids on the mainland.

At the beginning of December, therefore, *Cayuga* and *Athabaskan* helped to strengthen the garrison and defences of Chodo and Sok-to. At night the destroyers anchored in The Slot between Sok-to and Pip'a-got keeping radar watch and occasionally firing 4in or starshell. The days were spent bombarding reported enemy positions, ferrying guerrillas from one island to another, and treating their wounded. *Athabaskan* was relieved by the Dutch destroyer *Van Galen*, herself replaced by *Sioux* for an eventful period of raid and counter-raid.

Cayuga arrived on 20th December. She soon found that accurate fire from the Amgak battery prevented any anchoring in The Slot during the hours of daylight. On the night of the 21/22nd, she opened radar-controlled 4in gunfire on a junk 5,000 yards away. The echo disappeared and on Christmas Eve she sank another junk in similar fashion.

At 1930 on the 28th *Cayuga* began Operation Cheerful. She had already sent a special communications and instruction party to the ROK vessel JML302. After dark JML302 towed several small junks full of guerrillas towards Chongyang-do and Ung-do in an attempt to recover these two little islands. *Cayuga* fired 247 4in

shells at the enemy beaches, but the junks were poorly disciplined. They were soon in difficulties and withdrew after they came under heavy mortar fire. *Cayuga* treated their casualties, directed air strikes against Ung-do and then took the wounded to Pengyong-do.

For the next couple of nights bad weather prevented a Communist invasion of Chodo and Sok-to. At midnight on the 31st, *Cayuga* anchored in The Slot and fired sixteen 2-gun salvoes at Ung-do instead of the customary 16-bell New Year Salute. A ten-minute bombardment of Taewha-do on New Year's Day 1952 concluded her patrol and she headed for Kure. *Athabaskan* had been drydocked at Kure for several days and both she and *Cayuga* were visited by members of the Canadian Government.

On 12th January *Athabaskan* arrived off Wonsan on the east coast. Several islands in Wonsan harbour were held by UN forces providing some sort of anchorage for UN ships and preventing the Communists from developing this important communications centre. Communist forces were being reinforced by rail from China. Not only did this line pass through Wonsan, but for a hundred miles from Songjin to Hungnam, it ran right along the coast. Commander King was told that there were five targets codenamed Package 1 to 5, which had to be bombarded at irregular intervals, and eleven targets codenamed Derail 1 to 11, to be visited daily and bombarded with a set number of shells. The aim was to cut or reduce supplies along the railway and to harass repair crews. The plan was never entirely effective although large amounts of ammunition were expended. In nine days *Athabaskan* fired 1,292 rounds of 4in and 5,860 rounds of 40mm, but Communist supplies still reached the front line and the Tribals returned again and again to this section of the east coast.

After replenishing at Sasebo, *Athabaskan* recommenced carrier screenings in the Yellow Sea on the 26th. New arrangements meant that instead of staying with the carrier for several weeks at a time, each escorting destroyer took it in turns to patrol inshore every other night or so. This was known as a Worthington patrol. Usually nothing much happened. Starshell was fired to illuminate the waters around Yuk-to, Wollae-do, Mahap-to or whichever little island seemed threatened by invasion that night. Sometimes a junk would be spotted but usually such vessels disappeared among the rocks and mudflats before they could be sunk. Occasionally a battery on Choppeki Peninsula would open fire. It would be promptly silenced by 4in gunfire and for the next week or so passing destroyers would throw a few shells in its direction.

On 2/3rd February, *Athabaskan* and LSMR401 engaged several small boats near Yuk-to, but ceased fire because it was believed that they were friendly guerrillas returning from a raid. Next day it was learned that they were Communists capturing Yuk-to. From then on that island was added to the list of bombardment targets.

As winter turned to spring, *Athabaskan* screened carriers during the day, patrolled inshore during the night and went to Japan every couple of weeks. On 29th February she shelled the mainland in support of a guerrilla night raid on Yuk-som, but the island was empty. On 4th March, she helped search for an LCPL lost off Mu-do

in bitter weather. It was unsuccessful and was called off. That night *Athabaskan*'s officers were so incensed by the wardroom movie "I Was A Communist For The F.B.I." that they formed a special gun's crew to fire fifty 4in shells at the mainland. Their efforts seemed to worry the gunnery officer more than the Communists.

Later in March, *Athabaskan* had two weeks' rest and relaxation at Hong Kong and then returned to her carrier and patrol duties off Pengyong-do. From 8th to 13th June, there were several attempts by the Communists to raid or capture Mu-do and Yongmae-do. *Athabaskan* helped to repel these night attacks. Then the guerrillas retaliated on the 13/14th, but their civilian junk crews panicked and forced an early withdrawal. Then, almost suddenly, *Athabaskan*'s second tour of duty in Korean waters was over and on 9th July she arrived back at Esquimalt for refit.

Athabaskan sailed to begin her third tour on 29th October. By 7th November she was back off the west coast of Korea, screening carriers and patrolling inshore – a routine that continued with occasional breaks in Japan until 13th February 1953. One such leave-period occurred at Christmas and parties were arranged for the local children at Kure. Once *Athabaskan* rescued an injured partisan and took him to hospital. On 18th January thick pack ice forced *Athabaskan* to slip her cable and lose her anchor off Chodo. Four days later the US tug *Quapaw* helped her recover it.

On 14th February *Athabaskan* left Tokyo taking the RCN Chief of Staff (Vice-Admiral Mainguy) to see an interdiction patrol along the east coast railway. On the 18th, a Panther jet fighter crashed two miles ahead. Within ten minutes the pilot was aboard and *Athabaskan* was closing *Valley Forge* to transfer him and Vice-Admiral Mainguy. Although not always honoured if either ship was in a hurry, it was customary for a carrier to send across the pilot's weight in ice-cream as a reward for his safe return.

The next day *Athabaskan* shelled Tanchon where a train and factory were burning, and then patrolled off Yang-do until the 27th. There were occasional bombardments and once *Athabaskan* sank a mine with 40mm and rifle fire.

Athabaskan took part in an abortive anti-submarine hunt as soon as she rejoined the carrier *Glory* in the Yellow Sea. The earlier pattern of screening and patrolling was then repeated as the year wore on. She was drydocked at Sasebo in March and carried out several bombardments in support of a guerrilla raid on the mainland opposite Chodo at the end of the month. May saw rest and relaxation at Hong Kong and on 2nd June a detachment from *Athabaskan* took part in the Coronation Day Parade at Kure.

The rest of June was quite busy. On the 21st *Athabaskan* began patrolling and train-busting off the east coast. On the 24/25th, two 4in salvoes stopped a train south of Songjin and *Athabaskan* continued firing until it was destroyed just before dawn. On the 29/30th she fired at two trains, possibly hitting the second one. The next night two more salvoes stopped and destroyed a 24-car train, but fog prevented further success that night, although they heard a train running along the coastal track. On 4/5th July it was still foggy. Another train was heard and fired at. It soon stopped,

but later escaped. A similar shoot was also unsuccessful on the night of the 6/7th.

By the 18th *Athabaskan* was patrolling off the Haeju-man, and on the 20th she shelled Communist barracks opposite Mu-do. On the 24th the destroyer joined the screen of the carrier *Bairoko* in the Yellow Sea. Three days later at 2200 'Cease Fire' was signalled to all ships. The Korean War was over.

UN ships still had to carry out peacetime patrols to prevent Communist breaches of the Armistice. They also had to help evacuate personnel and blow up installations on islands to be handed over to the North Koreans. The work was easier because the ships were not darkened and stuffy. Gradually peacetime routine returned to the area, but there were still emergencies as on 16th August when a Corsair ditched when taking off from *Point Cruz*. A helicopter arrived and was picking up the pilot when it crashed itself. *Athabaskan* lowered her whaler and motor-cutter and picked up all three men. While the cutter returned the helicopter crew to the carrier, *Athabaskan* treated the pilot's injured back and transferred him to *Point Cruz* by jackstay in the afternoon. On 2nd October, *Birmingham* and *Athabaskan* stood by the small tanker *Tongshui* aground on Pratas Reef in the South China Sea. They waited until a tug was on its way the next day. At Manila, also in October, there were sports meetings, blood donations and the baptism of two Canadian babies in the ship's bell.

Presently this period of patrols, exercises and visits was over, and on 11th December, *Athabaskan* arrived back home at Esquimalt for a major conversion. When completed in October 1954, she was known officially as a destroyer-escort. Her gun armament comprised four 4in guns (all forward), two 3in/50 US-designed AA guns (on the superstructure aft) and four single 40mm AA guns. The tubes and squid were unchanged, but a new short, aluminium lattice foremast had been installed. She was also fitted with the latest electronic gear and whip aerials. Her displacement had gone up to 2,200 tons standard and 2,745 tons full load. Trials some time later gave a speed of 31.8 knots.

Athabaskan's trials, workups and exercises were interrupted in December when she had to stand by the oceanographic survey ship *Cedarwood*, in danger of foundering in heavy seas off the Pacific coast. Otherwise cruises, goodwill visits and combined RCN-USN exercises occupied her time. She took Vancouver Reservists and Wrens for a trip around Howe Sound and visited Monterey and Hawaii with *Cayuga*. Returning from Pearl Harbor, a girl stowaway was found in the tiller flat. She washed dishes as far as Long Beach where she was handed over to the FBI.

On 1st October 1955, *Athabaskan* and *Cayuga* were taking troops for a landing exercise near Vancouver when *Athabaskan* ran onto Spanish Bank. With all hands on the quarterdeck, engines going full astern and the tug *Glendon* pulling aft, she got off after 44 minutes aground. There was slight damage to the sonar dome and Chernikeef log, but immediate docking was unnecessary. Certainly *Athabaskan* was in tip-top condition on 21st October when she took the Princess Royal from Victoria to Vancouver, escorted by *Cayuga* and other ships.

1955, 1956, 1957, 1958: For *Athabaskan* and *Cayuga* these years meant pilotage and amphibious exercises in the narrow inlets of British Columbia, air defence, gunnery

and anti-submarine exercises off California and Pearl Harbor, goodwill visits, reviews, regattas and refits, these last usually followed by a month or so of trials and workups. Funnel caps were fitted to reduce the deterioration of signal halliards and electronic equipment. The galley stoves also drew better afterwards.

In March and April 1956 they passed through the Panama Canal and spent some time exercising in the West Indies before returning to Esquimalt. *Cayuga*'s participation in this exercise was delayed by serious condenser trouble. She had to steam on one engine when returning from exercises with *Athabaskan* and other ships at Pearl Harbor in January. The necessary repairs took some time to effect.

During AA exercises off California in April 1957, *Cayuga* demolished two targets in quick succession, a feat which resulted in her call sign being changed to 'Wyatt Earp'. An unidentified submarine contact off British Columbia kept *Athabaskan* and *Cayuga* busy from 4th to 7th June 1957 but they found nothing. In February and March 1958 both Tribals were in the Far East visiting Japan, Hong Kong and South Vietnam. In July 1958, *Athabaskan* rescued a lone yachtsman off California and towed his yacht *Noreen* 150 miles to San Francisco.

On 19th January 1959, *Athabaskan* and *Cayuga* left Esquimalt for the last time. The RCN had decided to form homogeneous escort squadrons instead of mixed flotillas. The two Tribals were therefore to exchange crews with *Saguenay* and *St Laurent* on the east coast. These two escorts would then sail to Esquimalt, leaving *Athabaskan*, *Cayuga*, *Haida*, *Huron*, *Iroquois*, *Micmac* and *Nootka* concentrated at Halifax.

Athabaskan and *Cayuga* arrived at Halifax in snow and ice on 16th February 1959. Their new crews soon introduced them to the round of NATO exercises in the Caribbean, Mid-Atlantic and the Western Approaches, that occupied so much of the RCN's time on the east coast. There were of course visits, refits and gales. Even while the two Tribals were working-up at Bermuda in March 1959, *Cayuga* escorted the gate vessel *Porte St Jean* and the auxiliary tug *St John* through a heavy gale that might have overwhelmed the little ships.

In May 1959 *Athabaskan*, *Cayuga* and *Micmac* helped escort the Royal Yacht *Britannia* taking Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh to open the St Lawrence Seaway. On 11th November 1959, *Athabaskan* rescued a Banshee pilot who had ditched taking off from *Bonaventure* in the Western Approaches. In May 1960, *Athabaskan* became a filmstar, playing the part of *Cayuga* for the film "The Great Impostor".

In September 1962, *Bonaventure*, *Athabaskan*, *Cayuga*, *Micmac*, *Nootka* and *Crescent* sailed for a cruise in European waters. On 23rd and 24th September, *Bonaventure* and *Athabaskan* were detached to search for a Flying Tiger Constellation which had lost three engines and ditched 500 miles west of Ireland. The search was called off when other ships found and picked up the survivors. Many of the anti-submarine exercises on this cruise were designed to show the difference between genuine echoes from submarines and those returned by submerged wrecks in shallow waters. They also exercised counter measures against frogmen.

During this period *Micmac* developed a leak in the port main engine and later had her whaler stove in by heavy seas. *Nootka* suffered a turbo-generator breakdown which caused complete power failure on three occasions. This did not prevent her taking part in the search for a missing R.Neth. Navy Grumman Tracker which eventually landed safely. Both *Nootka* and *Micmac* were repaired at Plymouth.

The cruise was cut short by the Cuban crisis and all RCN ships were ordered home on 25th October 1962. On 22nd October the following year *Athabaskan* was again in European waters and this time held a memorial service over the resting-place of her namesake, the first *Athabaskan*.

By now the Tribals were getting worn out. Refits and modernisation could not replace tired hulls or revitalise fatigued machinery. One by one they were being phased out of service. Yet *Athabaskan* could still perform vital work.

On 1st March 1964 she was on her way to meet *Crescent* and *Auriga* for anti-submarine exercises in the Atlantic. Waves were reaching 15 feet when an unusual vessel was sighted about five miles away. As *Athabaskan* approached, an Argus aircraft also arrived and dropped a smoke float near a lifeboat which had not been noticed before. The strange vessel was now identified as the stern half of the Liberian tanker *Amphialos*. Some of her crew were still on the drifting hulk with no boats or rafts. They had been there since the previous evening and had been unable to send radio signals.

Athabaskan closed the lifeboat and rescued eight men, one of whom (aged 69) died an hour later of a heart attack. *Crescent*, *Auriga*, *USS Searcher* and two more aircraft arrived. *Searcher*'s whaler broke down and she could only stand by. *Athabaskan*'s whaler broke her rudder and the coxswain had to steer with an oar over the stern, but the boat soon became almost unmanageable in the rough seas. One survivor jumped from *Amphialos*. He was rescued by one of *Athabaskan*'s frogmen and both were picked up by the destroyer. Eight more men were saved from a second lifeboat that was found and then both of *Athabaskan*'s frogmen tried to swim a liferaft across to *Amphialos*. Both detached their encumbering lifelines, but they were soon exhausted in the cloying oil and had to be picked up themselves. *Athabaskan* then closed to within a hundred feet and fired a Coston gun line so that the survivors could haul the liferaft across to the hulk. Eighteen, including the captain, lowered themselves into the liferaft but the seas kept washing them back onto the wreck. *Athabaskan* came in even closer, fired another line over the raft and towed it clear. Survivors and liferaft were soon on board and *Athabaskan* was heading for Halifax, while *Crescent* waited for the deserted wreck to founder.

In June 1964, *Athabaskan* took part in anti-submarine exercises off Scotland. In September 1964 she shared in RCN-USN exercises in the Western Atlantic that involved 100 ships and 300 aircraft. By the end of the year she was in ready reserve at Halifax. Gradually she was run down, placed on the reserve list, de-equipped and then discarded. In July 1969 *Athabaskan*'s last voyage began at the end of a tow – from Halifax to Italy for breaking up.

Commanding Officers

Cdr J. S. Davis, RCN 20th January 1948 – 28th October 1948.
Lt-Cdr G. H. Davidson, RCN 29th October 1948 – 25th November 1948.
Cdr M. A. Medland, RCN 26th November 1948 – 14th September 1949.
Cdr R. P. Welland, DSC, CD, RCN 13th March 1950 – 2nd July 1951.
Cdr D. G. King, CD, RCN 3rd July 1951 – 23rd July 1952.
Cdr J. C. Reed, DSC, CD, RCN 25th September 1952 – 20th December 1953.
Lt-Cdr C. E. Richardson, CD, RCN 25th October 1954 – 15th January 1956.
Cdr P. S. Booth, CD, RCN 16th January 1956 – 5th September 1957.
Cdr D. S. Boyle, CD, RCN 6th September 1957 – 1st March 1959.
Cdr J. H. G. Bovey, DSC, CD, RCN 2nd March 1959 – 10th August 1959.
Cdr D. R. Saxon, DSC, CD, RCN 11th August 1959 – 24th May 1961.
Capt G. C. Edwards, RCN 25th May 1961 – 15th March 1962.
Cdr A. E. Fox, RCN 16th March 1962 – 3rd January 1963.
Lt-Cdr S. Dee, RCN 4th January 1963 – 19th July 1964.
Cdr J. Y. Clarke, RCN 12th August 1964 – December 1967.

Pennant Numbers

R79 December 1947 – December 1949
DDE219 January 1950 – July 1969

HMAS Bataan

First of name

Builders: Cockatoo Docks & Engineering Pty, Sydney
Engined by: Cockatoo Docks & Engineering Pty, Sydney
Laid Down: 18th February 1942 (as *Kurnai*)
Launched: 15th February 1944 (as *Bataan* by Mrs Douglas MacArthur)
Completed: 25th May 1945

BATAAN WAS the only Tribal-class destroyer not to be named after a people or nation of the British Empire. The Canadians took their names from Red Indians and the Australians from Aborigine tribes. Following this naming policy *Bataan* was originally scheduled as *Kurnai*. However, on 9th August 1942, the Australian cruiser *Canberra* was sunk while operating with US forces during the Battle of Savo Island. In recognition of her brave fight, the USN launched one of their new cruisers on 19th April 1943 as *Canberra*. As a return compliment the Australians renamed *Kurnai*, *Bataan*, in honour of General Douglas MacArthur who spent much of the war based in Australia.

Bataan and *Warramunga*, fresh from her Sydney refit, joined TF74 in Subic Bay on 26th July 1945. They were still there preparing for the final assault on Japan when the end of the war came. The invasion fleet turned itself into an occupation force and *Shropshire*, *Hobart*, *Bataan* and *Warramunga* sailed for Japan via Okinawa. Both *Bataan* and *Warramunga* were present at the official Japanese Surrender in Tokyo Bay on 2nd September.

Their first task was the rescue of prisoners of war and internees from official and unofficial camps and centres all over Japan. Usually a hospital ship would be sent to the port nearest such a camp to 'process' the unfortunate people there. This clinical term covered the provision of medical attention, delousing, bathing and reclothing. If they were then fit enough to travel, they were transferred to the destroyers who had stocked up with extra survivor kits, beds, blankets, mess-traps, cutlery, cigarettes, chocolate and food. As each destroyer arrived in Tokyo Bay she was cheered by the other ships present.

On such a trip on 12th September, *Warramunga* embarked (from the hospital ship *Rescue* at Sendai) 132 men, 32 women and 15 children – English, Australians, Africans, Indians, Malayans, Americans, Spanish, Armenians, Greeks, Arabs and Javanese. Some were aching to unburden themselves, some were just silent.

Bataan and *Warramunga* also went to Hamamatsu and Kamaishi on similar errands of mercy. By the end of September, *Hobart* and *Warramunga* had left for refit at Sydney, although *Shropshire* and *Bataan* stayed in Japanese waters until November.

In June 1950, *Bataan*'s peacetime routine of exercises, visits and refits was interrupted by the outbreak of the Korean War. The Australian Government immediately placed her and the frigate *Shoalhaven* at the disposal of the UN and on 5th July they joined the first UN task force operating in the Yellow Sea. For most of the time *Bataan* was employed on routine escort and anti-submarine duties, although she did carry out some bombardments. She was transferred to the east coast and on 17th July joined *Juneau*, *James E. Kyes*, *Higbee* and *Collett* in covering the US 1st Cavalry Division landing at Pohang on the eastern flank of the Pusan perimeter. They shelled east coast targets before and after the landing, being temporarily interrupted by typhoon Grace on the 22nd.

By 1st August, *Bataan* was back on the west coast and being shelled by Communist artillery in the Haeju-Man. *Belfast* arrived to add her 6in shells to *Bataan*'s retaliatory bombardment.

On 6th August *Warramunga* sailed from Sydney to join *Bataan*, and the two Tribals spent a lot of time screening carriers off the west coast of Korea. Like *Athabaskan*, they helped to cover the Inchon landings and then shared patrols inshore and in the Yalu Gulf during the autumn. Both also took part in the Chinnampo evacuation in December. In March 1951, *Bataan* spent some time off the east coast screening the US carrier *Bataan*, but in April she followed *Athabaskan* back to the Yellow Sea.

In June, *Tobruk* and *Anzac* arrived from Australia, so *Bataan* returned home for refit. *Warramunga* should also have been relieved, but she stayed for a while to help screen west coast carriers. Every night from 24th to 29th July, at least one destroyer was sent to carry out a radar picket patrol along the 38th Parallel in case of surprise attack on the carriers. Once *Cayuga* and *Huron* took over an anti-submarine hunt started by US destroyers, but after a squid attack they decided it was not a submarine-contact. That, and a bombardment of Haeju-Man, was the only excitement. In August, *Warramunga* went round to the east coast to help shell Wonsan before returning to Australia for refit.

Bataan and *Warramunga* were back in Korean waters by early 1952. Off Taedong-Man at dusk, five 76mm shells straddled *Bataan*. Four were nearmisses, but one hit aft, wrecking the captain's cabin and ruining Commander Bracegirdle's old frock coat. Rear-Admiral Scott-Moncrieff made him a signal expressing sympathy for the loss of his tail. By now *Bataan* had acquired something of a legend among the offshore islands of Korea. She was known dramatically as 'The Grey Ghost of the West Coast', enigmatically as 'The Big Top', and more explicitly as 'Brace's Circus'.

Bataan added to this legend on 19th May, when she took part in a Round-Up operation. ROK guerrilla forces would land on a peninsula and drive along it towards an evacuation beach, dealing with all enemy personnel and equipment in their way. Air strikes and naval bombardment would isolate the peninsula and prevent enemy reinforcements interfering.

At 1000 *Bataan* anchored off Mu-do to cover the guerrillas landing on Ponggu-muon peninsula. First of all the evacuation beach had to be secured, but this part of the

operation was held up because the junks slowed down when approaching, for fear of the Allied bombardment. Once the beach had been seized, *Bataan*'s guns sealed off the peninsula, while her sick-bay operated on a guerrilla injured by a machine-gun bullet.

At 1130 *Bataan* covered the main landing and began bombarding enemy positions, mortar posts, troop concentrations and minefields further inland. Gradually the guerrillas worked their way down the peninsula and were evacuated at 1900. They had inflicted 150 casualties on the enemy and demolished 27 houses, 2 observation posts, one 76mm gun, one mortar, seven machine guns and one command post. One Communist soldier had been captured and ten Korean families evacuated. The guerrillas also took with them 120 bags of rice and 15 cows. Their leader showed his appreciation of *Bataan*'s support by presenting Commander Bracegirdle with a liberated Communist calf.

The next Round-Up was scheduled for 31st May/1st June. *Bataan* was assigned to *Ocean*'s screen while she flew off aircraft to cover a guerrilla raid up the Han River estuary. *Amethyst* was given the inshore bombardment, but this Round-Up was not successful. Fog and cloud hampered air strikes, while the junks were becalmed during their approach. Soon after landing they were ordered to withdraw.

Warramunga meanwhile had been operating on the east coast. On 25th April she had helped escort *Iowa* during a powerful air-gun bombardment of Chongjin. *Warramunga* had then carried out an interdiction patrol along the railway. Once while shelling a railway bridge near Chongjin she had stopped engines to turn close inshore, when five guns straddled her with nearmisses. *Warramunga* went full astern out to sea, her forward guns silencing three of the field pieces.

In July *Warramunga* joined *Bataan* in the Yellow Sea. *Iroquois* and *Nootka* were there as well. The Tribals continued their usual routine of screening carriers with regular inshore patrols and bombardments, mainly around the Haeju-man.

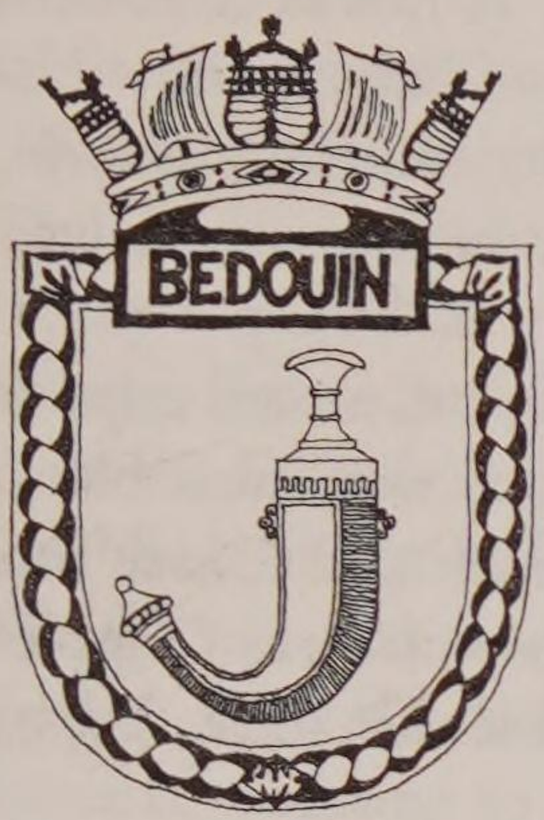
Bataan remained in service with the RAN after the end of the Korean War. In 1954 she was laid up in reserve awaiting conversion to an anti-submarine escort similar to *Arunta*. In 1957 the conversion was cancelled and she was put on the disposal list. By the end of 1958 *HMAS Bataan* had been sold for scrap.

Commanding Officers

Cdr H. M. Burrell, RAN 16th April 1945 – October 1946.
Cdr J. C. Morrow, DSO, DSC, RAN November 1946 – 26th May 1948.
Cdr A. S. Storey, DSC, RAN 27th May 1948 – 28th September 1949.
Cdr F. N. Cook, DSC, RAN 29th September 1949 – 26th January 1950.
Cdr W. B. M. Marks, RAN 27th January 1950 – 23rd September 1951.
Cdr W. S. Bracegirdle, DSC, RAN 24th September 1951 – December 1953.
Cdr G. L. Fowle, DSC, RAN 7th December 1953 – 7th November 1954.

Pennant Numbers

I91 April 1945 – January 1952
D191 February 1952 – 1958



HMS Bedouin

Second of name

Builders: William Denny, Dumbarton
Engined by: William Denny, Dumbarton
Ordered: June 1936
Laid Down: January 1937
Launched: 21st December 1937 (by Lady Douglas and Clydesdale)
Commissioned: 14th March 1937

EVERY YEAR a reunion is held in London. Present are the survivors of those who served in *HMS Bedouin* during the whole of her life. Their wives, relatives and friends are there, meeting, perhaps for the first time, Nobby and Jim and No. 1 – people whom they have heard a lot about for twenty years, but never met. Those who have been to the reunion before talk about holidays and houses and gardens and all the things that people who have not met for a year, talk about. But mostly they all talk about *Bedouin* – their ship.

They talk about her early life before the outbreak of war in 1939, escorting *Empress of Australia* down-channel, and the loss of the submarine *Thetis*. They recall the early days of the war, anti-submarine patrols and escorting capital ships in Northern waters. Some remember King George VI's inspection of detachments from Home Fleet destroyers at Scapa Flow on 8th October. Others talk about the *City of Flint* incident which occurred in November.

Kelly and *Bedouin* were sent out to recapture this US merchant ship which had been taken by the German pocket-battleship *Deutschland*. *City of Flint* tried to get away by slipping down the Norwegian coast inside territorial waters, but Norway interned the prize crew and later returned the ship to the USA, so neither Britain nor Germany derived any advantage.

The Bedouins talk about east coast and Norwegian convoys, the air raids on Scapa Flow and the Canadian troop convoys of December. Some mention *Bedouin*'s refit, repairs and degaussing, completed at Wallsend on 12th March 1940. And then they begin to recall 7/8th April, when *Bedouin* left Scapa Flow as part of the Home Fleet destroyer force.

The next morning, *Repulse*, *Penelope*, *Bedouin*, *Eskimo*, *Punjabi* and *Kimberley* were detached to help the destroyer *Glowworm* who had apparently encountered German ships in rough weather. By 1900 the *Repulse* force had been diverted to join *Renown* and her destroyers off Vestfiord, where a minefield had been laid to hinder German iron-ore ships trading in and out of Narvik.

During the 9th, British forces concentrated in the approaches to Vestfiord. The Tribals, soon to be joined by *Cossack*, spent most of their time screening the bigger

ships from U-boats and from air attacks which began that day. A flotilla of H-class destroyers went into Ofotfiord on the 10th, fought the 1st Battle of Narvik and withdrew with the loss of *Hardy* and *Hunter*. It was suggested that *Penelope*, *Bedouin*, *Cossack*, *Eskimo* and *Punjabi* should go in and finish the job, but the idea was shelved and the Vestfiord force was dispersed for three days.

Penelope, *Eskimo* and *Kimberley* were ordered south to intercept German ships at Bodo. They tried to pick up a Norwegian coastal pilot but none were available so they went on without one to Tranoy. At 1500 *Penelope* hit a rock and *Eskimo* had to tow her back to Skelfiord, an inlet in the Lofotens that became known as Cripples Creek because of the number of damaged warships that found shelter there. *Eskimo* and *Kimberley* then rejoined the destroyers in Vestfiord.

About midnight, U-25 fired three torpedoes at *Bedouin* and *Eskimo*, but something went wrong with their magnetic pistols. When three explosions occurred near by, Commander McCoy decided that he was patrolling in an observation minefield controlled from Baroy, where he had seen some activity. He therefore moved farther out and it was not until after the war that the Bedouins learned of their escape.

Cossack spent 11th and 12th April screening *Furious* while she flew off Swordfish to attack Narvik and Trondheim. She then helped to screen Vice-Admiral Whitworth's transfer from *Renown* to *Warspite*. It had been decided to send the battleship to accompany destroyers in a second attack on Narvik in case a German cruiser was lurking there. This transfer was accomplished at night and *Warspite* set course for Ofotfiord, collecting the necessary destroyers en route. *Eskimo* was the last to join off Baroy. At 1100 on the 13th, she had seen a submarine on the surface. It had flashed 'U' and then dived. *Eskimo* had not been able to get a contact, but Commander Micklethwait dropped a pattern of depth-charges just the same.

Just before noon, *Warspite*'s force left the rough swell of Vestfiord and entered the smooth waters of Ofotfiord. The weather was overcast and misty, with flurries of snow and rain. *Hero*, acting as fleet guide, led at 10 knots. Astern came *Forester* and *Icarus* streaming their minesweeping gear. To starboard of *Warspite* were *Bedouin*, *Punjabi* and *Eskimo* with *Cossack*, *Kimberley* and *Foxhound* to port.

Once the narrows had been passed, the sweeps were taken in and the flank destroyers moved about one to three miles ahead. *Warspite* also catapulted her Swordfish to scout ahead and, incidentally, to bomb and sink U-64. Two other U-boats were in the area, but they played no part in the battle, although their reported presence created some anxiety at times. Swordfish from *Furious* were also to participate in the action and they did attack the German destroyers, but without significantly affecting the battle. No cruiser was there and the only German surface warships present were the big destroyers already damaged and short of fuel and ammunition after the 1st Battle of Narvik.

They were *Diether Von Roeder*, *Hans Ludemann* and *Hermann Kunne* (2,400 tons, five 5in, six 37mm, twelve 20mm guns and eight torpedo-tubes) and *Georg Thiele*, *Wolfgang Zenker*, *Bernd Von Arnim*, *Erich Giese* and *Erich Koellner* (2,200 tons; five

5in, four 37mm, six 20mm guns and eight tubes). The 2nd Battle of Narvik was destined to be the sort of destroyer action for which the Tribals had been designed.

It was thanks to the Swordfish, however, that the first round went to the British. The aircraft reported that *Erich Koellner* was lurking in Ballengenfiord. The starboard destroyers passed by with all guns and torpedo-tubes trained to starboard. At 1229 *Bedouin*, *Eskimo* and *Erich Koellner* sighted each other and fired torpedoes at once. *Bedouin*'s, *Eskimo*'s and *Punjabi*'s guns smothered *Erich Koellner* seconds before her bow was blown off by *Bedouin*'s torpedo, and *Warspite*'s 15in shells arrived and sank her. The force moved on up the fiord.

Now *Hans Ludemann*, *Wolfgang Zenker*, *Hermann Kunne* and *Bernd Von Arnim* appeared steaming to and fro across the fiord, firing guns and torpedoes in a vain attempt to stave off their approaching doom. One torpedo passed under *Cossack* and just missed *Warspite*.

By 1400, the battle was raging off Narvik itself. *Erich Giese* came out of Narvik harbour to help her comrades, was hit by every gun that could bear and drifted across the fiord ablaze. *Wolfgang Zenker*, *Hermann Kunne* and *Bernd Von Arnim* ran out of ammunition. *Hermann Kunne* went up Herjangsfiord chased by *Eskimo*, who destroyed her with one torpedo. The other two headed for Rombaksfiord, their retreat covered by a smokescreen and by *Hans Ludemann*, who concentrated her fire on the nearest pursuer, *Punjabi*.

Within a couple of minutes *Punjabi* was hit by six 5in shells. The first pierced her hull under the bridge, splinters wrecked the TS and put the guns in local control. The second hit the upper deck at the base of a ready-use ammunition locker which caught fire and exploded, the resulting splinters killing or injuring the ammunition supply party. The third shattered a watertight bulkhead right forward and flooded a magazine. The fourth was an air burst and started a fire between the funnels. The fifth hit right aft and started a fire in a storeroom so that the magazine had to be flooded. The sixth hit the starboard motor-boat and set it on fire, but splinters from that shell created much more havoc. They penetrated the engine-room and cut a steam-line, filling the engine-room with steam. Whirling across the upper-deck, other fragments from the same shell slashed all fire hoses and killed or injured the pompom, torpedo-tube and damage-control crews. *Punjabi* avoided a torpedo from *Bernd Von Arnim* and stopped – out of action for an hour with seven dead and many wounded. *Cossack* was also straddled sixteen times in ten minutes. Two nearmisses from *Hans Ludemann* holed her side, internal splinter damage causing one casualty and leaks in the shell rooms and magazines. The Germans disappeared up Rombaksfiord, temporarily reprieved.

It was now time to find out what the Germans had in Narvik harbour. *Cossack*, *Foxhound* and *Kimberley* picked their way in through the wrecks of the first battle to find *Diether Von Roeder* berthed alongside the jetty. *Cossack* fired first and missed. She fired again, hitting, and then *Diether Von Roeder*'s shells arrived, scoring eight hits on *Cossack*. One at the fore-end of the PO's mess killed all of 'A' mounting's ammunition supply party. Another hit aft, cut the main steam-line and all steering

and telegraph communications went dead. Yet another shell isolated No. 1 boiler room. The lower messdecks were on fire, so the forward magazines had to be flooded. The bridge and forefunnel were full of splinter holes and all electrical gunnery-control circuits were out of action.

Diether Von Roeder, hit by the destroyers and set ablaze by *Warspite*, fell silent. *Foxhound* closed her, silenced a shore machine gun, and then the scuttling charges in *Diether Von Roeder* went off and she blew up.

Meanwhile, *Cossack*, her steering and engines dead, drifted across the harbour and ran aground on a submerged wreck. Now her struggle began. The pompom and after guns were manned ready to fire in local control, while the rest of the crew put out the fires, stopped the flooding and moved weights aft. The 4.7in guns dealt with the merchant ships still afloat in the harbour; while the pompoms silenced riflemen sniping at *Cossack* from the town. 'B' mounting got into action and forced a mobile howitzer up on the mountainside to move off.

Eleven men had been killed and more than a dozen wounded. The worst cases, many burned, were put in the sick bay and captain's cabin and given morphia. The next worst were put in officers' cabins and the least injured were treated in the wardroom. *Foxhound* sent her doctor across to help, although her offer of an immediate tow was declined. The whaler was repaired and lowered to sound a route clear of the wrecks. Food was prepared in the galley and the wireless aerials were repaired, but all the confidential books were burned, just in case *Cossack* did not get off.

Just before 1500, *Eskimo*, *Forester*, *Hero*, *Bedouin* and *Icarus* entered Rombaksfiord looking for the German destroyers there. With only one casualty, but low on ammunition and with 'A' mounting out of action, Commander McCoy decided to turn round and go up Rombaksfiord stern-first. While he was doing this, the first three entered the fiord. *Hans Ludemann*, still acting as rearguard, nearmissed *Eskimo* and *Forester*, but was herself hit by the British destroyers. *Hans Ludemann* turned, fired her torpedoes and ran farther up the fiord past *Georg Thiele*, lying close inshore. The British destroyers wrecked this fresh enemy and she ran blazing ashore.

In a final despairing effort, *Georg Thiele* launched her torpedoes as she rolled over and sank. Seeing the torpedo tracks approaching, *Forester* and *Hero* raced back down the fiord stern-first, but *Eskimo* was not so lucky. She was just turning to fire her own last torpedo and was broadside on across the fiord. Commander Micklethwait avoided *Hans Ludemann*'s three torpedoes by going full ahead and then immediately full astern so as not to run onto the rocks. At once the four torpedoes from *Georg Thiele* arrived. Three missed but the fourth hit forward, blowing off *Eskimo*'s bows and causing grievous loss of life below decks. 'B' guns continued firing until their ready-use ammunition was gone and *Eskimo* came out of Rombaksfiord stern-first. The wrecked bows were hanging straight down in the water, with cables and anchors run out below that, so that they took the ground in 19 fathoms of water. *Eskimo* stopped, slowly sinking by the head at the entrance to Rombaksfiord. Commander Micklethwait and his crew strove desperately to save their ship. Everything movable on the upper deck was thrown overboard. Accessible parts of the wreckage were cut

away. Bulkheads were shored up and all confidential books destroyed. All wounded and any hands not needed on board were transferred to other destroyers.

Some firing was still going on, but the 2nd Battle of Narvik was over. Commander McCoy collected all the available information and reported to Vice-Admiral Whitworth. *Punjabi* had put out her fires, repaired her steam system and pumped out the magazine. One boiler was still out of action, but she could do 15 knots and, with *Forester*, was now standing by *Eskimo*. *Cossack* was still aground and still being bothered by fire from the shore. All movable weights had been shifted and she had main steam on, but even helped by a tow from *Kimberley*, she could not get off. Some of her wounded had been transferred to *Punjabi* for treatment aboard *Warspite*. The German destroyers *Hans Ludemann*, *Wolfgang Zenker* and *Bernd Von Arnim* had gone right up Rombaksfiord and had been wrecked there. *Erich Giese* was still drifting across Ofotfiord. Although ablaze, she refused to sink and eventually ran aground. A torpedo fired at her missed and exploded unpleasantly close to *Cossack*.

German resistance ashore seemed negligible and Vice-Admiral Whitworth considered the possibility of landing bluejackets and Royal Marines to capture Narvik. However, U-boats had been reported in the fiord so *Warspite* fired at a few targets of opportunity and withdrew, taking most of the destroyers with her. Passing down Ofotfiord they took off the *Hardy* survivors, who had been looked after by the Norwegians since the 1st Battle of Narvik.

Bedouin, joined by *Hostile* and *Ivanhoe*, remained off Narvik until the early hours of 14th April when they escorted *Eskimo* stern-first to Skelfiord. About the same time, the tide lifted *Cossack* off. She too headed for the open sea, steering stern-first at 6 knots and escorted by *Kimberley*. Her dead were buried at sea and the rest of her wounded were transferred to *Warspite*.

The damaged ships returned to the UK for repairs. The other destroyers, including *Bedouin*, remained at Harstad which soon replaced Skelfiord as the principal base for operations against Narvik. Allied strategy demanded the capture of the port, so the destroyers spent many days on patrol in Ofotfiord and other inlets to prevent the Germans reinforcing their troops by sea. The Bedouins ferried the Irish Guards to and from Harstad. They shelled trains, power stations and tunnels. Once they rescued a party of Norwegian ladies and took them to Harstad. One night Commander McCoy was puzzled by 'PSB' being flashed from the shore. This is a naval abbreviation for 'Please Send Boat'. The signal was being made by an FAA pilot. His aircraft had been shot down fifty miles inland, and he had trekked across the mountains half carrying his gunner who had injured his back. They knew that if they could reach the coast the Navy would rescue them.

On 4th May the Luftwaffe arrived, their air raids filling each lengthening day with noise, nearmisses and losses. The Polish destroyer *Grom* was sunk and *Bedouin* and *Enterprise* rescued the survivors.

At last the Norwegian Campaign was over and *Bedouin* returned first to Scapa and then to Glasgow for repairs.

The Bedouins remember the summer of 1940 as one of standing by to repel the

expected invasion. But they also carried out anti-submarine sweeps from Immingham, Rosyth and the Clyde. They recall an Atlantic patrol with *Tartar* and *Mashona* when they sighted a lonely lifeboat containing the sole survivors from a Portuguese ship. The guest of honour at one *Bedouin* Reunion was Olaf Olafsen, a Norwegian resistance worker, picked up by *Bedouin* and *Ashanti* in the North Sea in September.

On 9th October *Bedouin* arrived at Portsmouth for destoring before moving round to Southampton for refit. Apart from normal repairs, the principal alteration was the removal of 'X' mounting and the installation of twin 4in guns. When completed on 17th November, *Bedouin* rejoined the 6th DF at Scapa Flow for working-up. The flotilla spent most of the winter of 1940/41 escorting capital ships during their exercises and on sweeps in the Atlantic and North Sea, usually in very rough weather.

On 28th February 1941, however, it became apparent that something special was about to happen. *Somali* embarked a party of soldiers, and at midnight on 1st March she left Scapa Flow with *Bedouin*, *Eskimo*, *Tartar* and *Legion* escorting the two LSIs *Princess Beatrix* and *Queen Emma* for a commando raid on Norway.

The force called at Skaalefiord where the destroyers fuelled from *War Pindari* and then steered north-east. The sky was overcast and there were frequent snow showers. At 0430 on the 4th they were in position off the Lofoten Islands and the force split up, heading for their separate targets.

Eskimo and *Legion* took *Princess Beatrix* to Vest Vaago where the LSI lowered her assault craft, some being escorted to Henningsvaer by *Eskimo*, and the others going with *Legion* to Stamsund. Meanwhile *Somali*, *Bedouin*, *Tartar* and *Queen Emma* had arrived off Holen. Here some of the commandos embarked in their assault craft and were escorted by *Tartar* to Svolvaer. The rest of the landing craft were lowered off Lille Molla and were taken to Brettesnes by *Bedouin*. Captain Caslon, being SNO and accompanied by the brigadier in charge of the commandos, set off on a tour of inspection.

At 0620 *Somali* met the 300-ton German trawler *Krebs*. The little vessel was only armed with a small gun in the bows, but she got off three rounds before she was hit by three 4.7in shells from *Somali*. One hit the ready-use locker which blew up. One hit the wheelhouse and one the boiler room. Her captain and thirteen men were killed. On fire and out of control, *Krebs* ran aground on a small island. Five men jumped overboard and were picked up by *Somali*.

Somali continued her tour of inspection, now being greeted by Norwegian fishing-boats, their crews waving and throwing gifts of fine quality fish on board.

There was little to report at Stamsund and Henningsvaer. *Legion* had investigated two puffers who immediately identified themselves as Norwegian fishing-boats, while *Eskimo* had nothing to do at all. The commandos were getting on with their tasks ashore without assistance.

At Svolvaer, *Tartar* had shelled and sunk a refrigerated fish-factory ship of 9,780 tons (*Hamburg*) much to the disappointment of the naval demolition party. They had hoped to sail this fine prize back to the UK, but had not told anyone about their plan. However, the trawler *Myrland* was instructed to head for Skaalefiord in the

Faeroes and she later arrived there safely. *Tartar* also sank *Pasajes* (1,996 tons) and *Felix Heumann* (2,468 tons) after they had been damaged by the demolition party.

Off Brettesnes *Bedouin* had intercepted the Norwegian coastal steamer *Mira*. The ferry took no notice of a shot across her bows so Commander McCoy put another shell into her bows and a third into her boiler room. *Mira* stopped and sank, and *Bedouin* rescued the people on board. A German officer had forced the Norwegian captain at pistol point, to keep going. The other German soldiers on board seemed to be some sort of ENSA troupe.

Somali then repeated her tour of the ports, while the demolition parties ashore finished off ships and fish-oil factories. German prisoners, suspected quislings, Norwegian volunteers and the British manager of Allen & Hanbury's factory were embarked. The last commandos came on board and the force left. They were spotted by a German reconnaissance aircraft but *Bedouin* jammed its sighting signal. The next day they were met by the 18th Cruiser Squadron and returned to Scapa Flow. They had successfully completed the first major commando raid of the war – a model for subsequent amphibious operations and a topic of conversation whenever Bedouins meet.

Other successful operations followed. Admiralty intelligence had learned that the Germans were planning something. Home Fleet patrols were intensified and several blockade runners were intercepted.

Then in May, the Bedouins learned the Germans' North Atlantic scheme. *Bedouin* and another destroyer had been escorting the large auxiliary minelayer *Southern Prince* on the first stage of the ex-liner's voyage across the Atlantic with equipment for *Rodney*'s refit. The two destroyers were heading for Iceland to fuel when they heard that *Bismarck* was out. They spent that night at action stations. If they fell in with the German battleship, *Bedouin* would attack her alone while the other destroyer held off to ensure an accurate sighting report. Somewhat to their relief, they did not meet *Bismarck*.

Two German weather-reporting trawlers were intercepted during the next few weeks by forces of cruisers and destroyers. The 407-ton *August Wriedt* was captured in the North Sea heading for Greenland on 29th May. She was later taken into the Royal Navy as *HMS Maria*. Then on 28th June the 344-ton *Lauenburg* was sunk by *Tartar* off Jan Mayen. Her crew of 34 were made prisoners.

Commander McCoy was relieved soon after by Commander Scurfield and *Bedouin* was refitted at Immingham. Her after funnel was cut down and Type 286M radar installed.

Bedouin's return to the Home Fleet early in September 1941, marked the beginning of a long, bitter, hard-working winter. She took the new governor to the Faeroes and helped screen *Victorious* in a strike on Bodo. One of the earliest Russian convoys stands out in the memories of *Bedouin* survivors. They left Iceland with PQ3 on 9th November. Four days before the convoy arrived in Russia on 28th November, *Kenya*, *Bedouin* and *Intrepid* landed three members of a Russian Military Mission. They then did a sweep along the coast with the Russian destroyers *Gremiatschi* and *Gromki*.

The four destroyers shelled a lighthouse and some villages occupied by the Germans. A short stay at Polyarnoe and then *Bedouin* was on her way back to the UK.

Bedouin shared *Ashanti*'s experiences in the Lofoten expedition of Christmas 1941 and in the fleet operations of January, February and March 1942. Then at last the long cold winter was over and April and May saw *Bedouin* refitting at Hull.

Work was completed on 26th May, the day Rommel began a major offensive in North Africa. Further isolated, Malta's situation was now desperate and an Axis invasion of the island seemed imminent. Accordingly it was decided to run two convoys to Malta – Vigorous from Alexandria and Harpoon from Gibraltar. *Bedouin* was assigned to Harpoon.

Bedouin survivors remember every detail of that operation: sailing from the Clyde on 4/5th June, fuelling at Gibraltar and then passing through the Straits. On the 12th the convoy was sighted by a Spanish ship. On the 13th they fuelled from *Brown Ranger* and were sighted by enemy aircraft. The 14th was a long day.

It began at 0158 when two Italian U-boats attacked without scoring any hits. All through the dark night, shadowing aircraft circled the convoy. At 1028 ten high-level bombers attacked and flew off by 1032.

1108 – 1135: Twenty-eight torpedo-bombers and twenty fighters sank the freighter *Tanimbar* and hit the cruiser *Liverpool*, who had to be towed back to Gibraltar.

1152 – 1202: Attacked by 40 dive-bombers and 41 fighters.

1815 – 1835: High-level and dive-bombing attacks by Ju88s concentrated on the carriers *Argus* and *Eagle* but failed to hit them.

2005 – 2032: High-level, torpedo-bomber and dive-bomber attacks coincided with a U-boat attack on *Argus* without result.

2130: The heavy ships withdrew leaving *Cairo*, *Bedouin*, *Partridge*, *Ithuriel*, *Matchless*, *Marne*, *Kujawiak*, *Blankney*, *Badsworth*, *Hebe*, *Speedy*, *Rye*, *Hythe*, ML121, ML134, ML135, ML459 and ML462 to escort the tanker *Kentucky* and the freighters *Burdwan*, *Chant*, *Troilus* and *Orari* to Malta.

2205: The last air attack took place in the gathering dusk.

The alarms of the night allowed no rest. At 0212 on the 15th, they were so close to the African shore that the escorting destroyers opened fire on the old wreck of *Havock*, aground off Kelibia. At 0540 it was getting light when the crow's-nest lookout reported "Algerian fishing-boats in sight". Commander Scurfield stared at the ships racing over the horizon. They were not fishermen but two cruisers and five destroyers. The Italian fleet had found them.

The Italian force was made up of *Raimondo Montecuccoli* (7,750 tons; eight 6in, six 3.9in, eight 37mm and twelve 20mm guns), *Eugenio Di Savoia* (8,662 tons with a similar armament), *Lanzaretto Malocello*, *Ugolini Vivaldi* (both of 1,093 tons with six 4.7in guns), *Alfredo Oriani* (1,685 tons; four 4.7in guns), *Ascari* (1,715 tons; four 4.7in guns) and *Premuda* (1,880 tons; four 5.5in guns). The destroyers had powerful automatic armaments and all the Italian ships carried torpedoes.

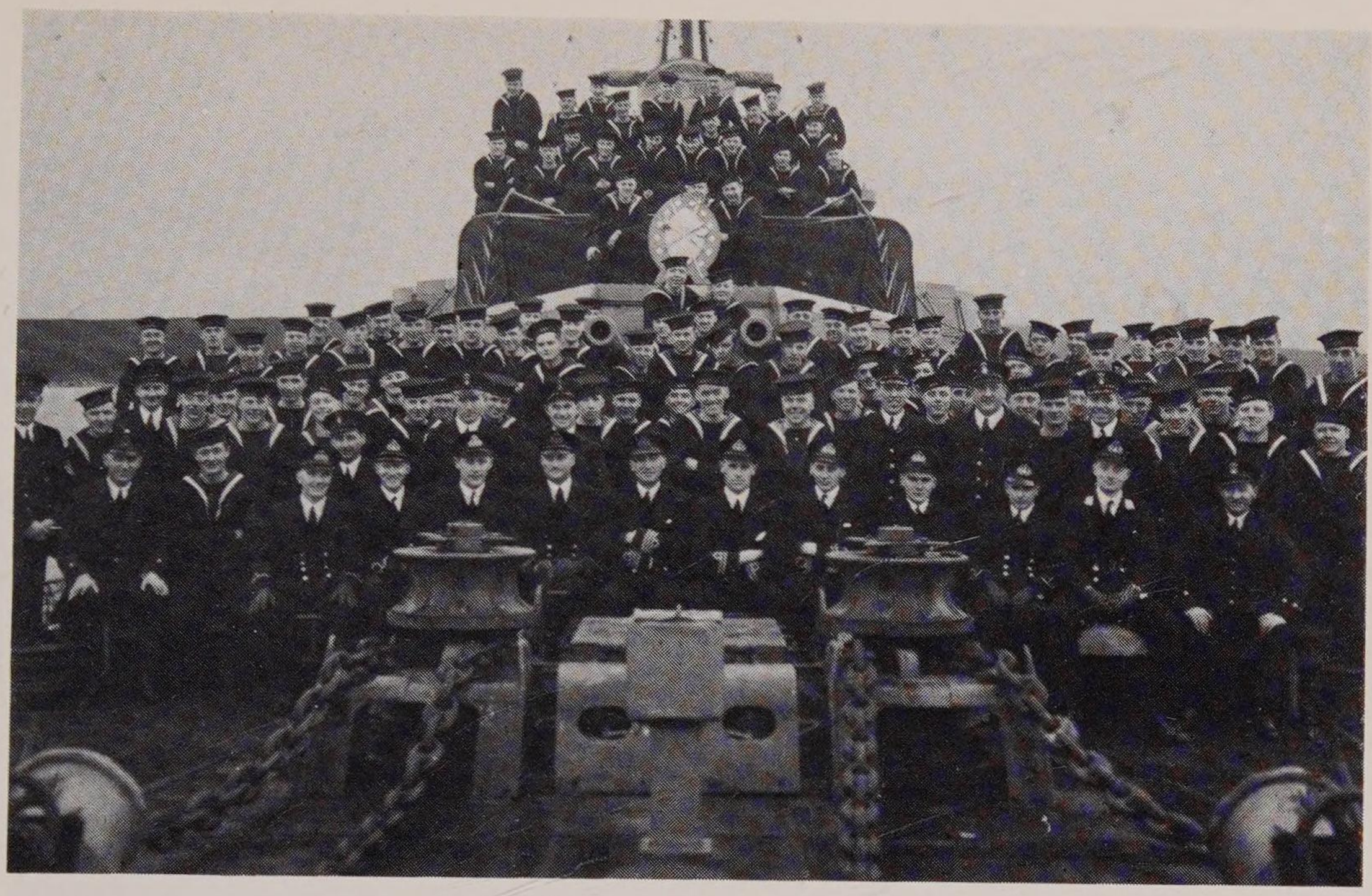
Bedouin screening *Queen Elizabeth*'s gunnery trials off Scapa Flow, December 1940. It looks as though someone has started painting the after superstructure. [*IWM*

Top: Ashanti and *Fame* aground at Whitburn, November 1940. Sheerlegs are removing *Ashanti*'s guns, while one man is going out in a bosun's chair and others are working alongside the ship. [*D. W. Souter*

Tartar's 2pdr. guns frame Svolvaer on 4th March 1941.

[*Ludovic Kennedy – via Captain L. P. Skipwith*

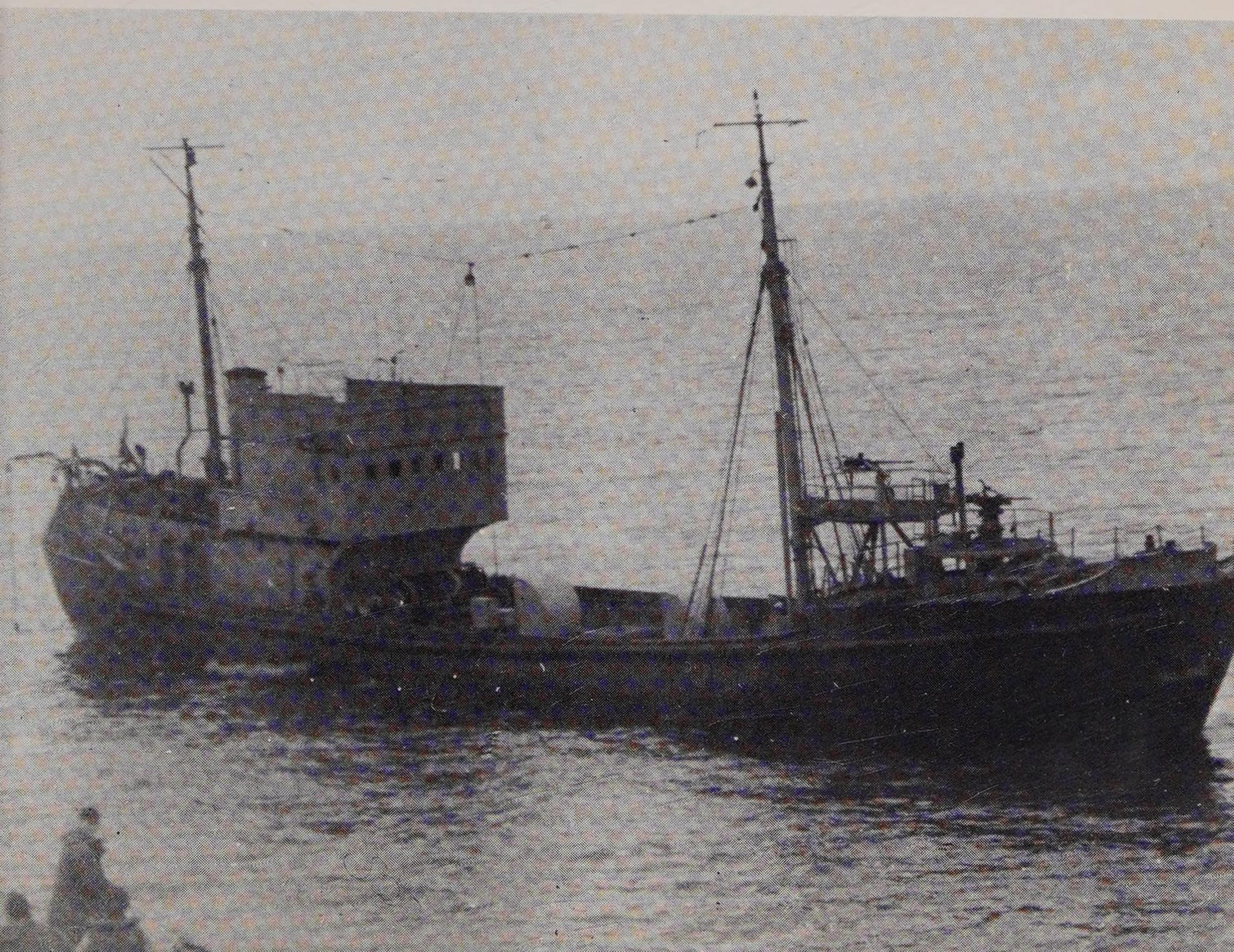
Top: The Lofoten Islands, 4th March 1941. Seagulls swoop around *Eskimo*'s stern as Norwegians throw fish on board. *Legion* in the background. [*IWM*



The crew of a Tribal – *Matabele* in March 1941. Commander Sherbrooke, later to win the VC in *Onslow*, is in the centre. [*D. F. G. Diamond*

Tartar closes the German trawler *Lauenburg* on 28th June 1941.

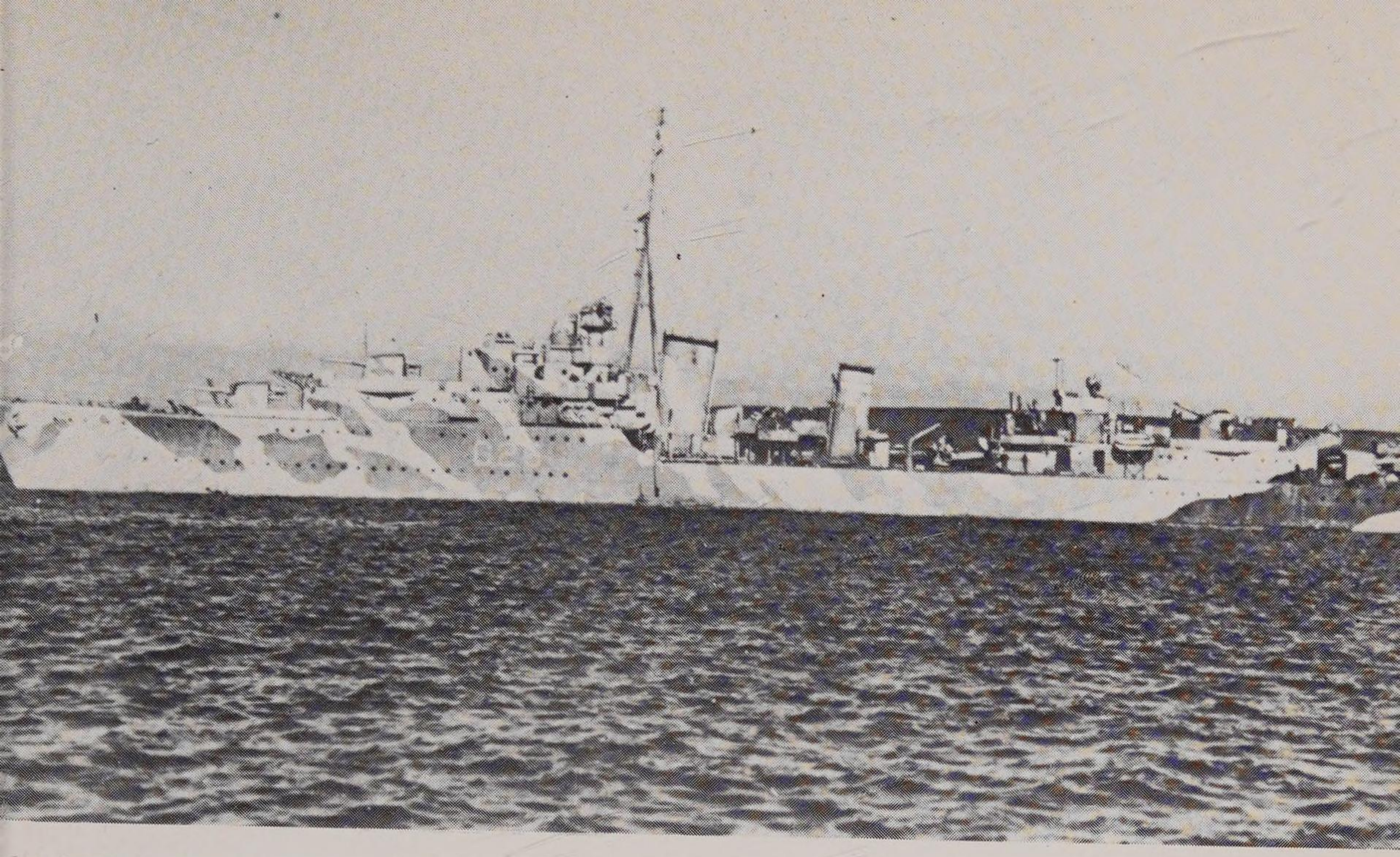
[*Ludovic Kennedy – via Captain L. P. Skipwith*

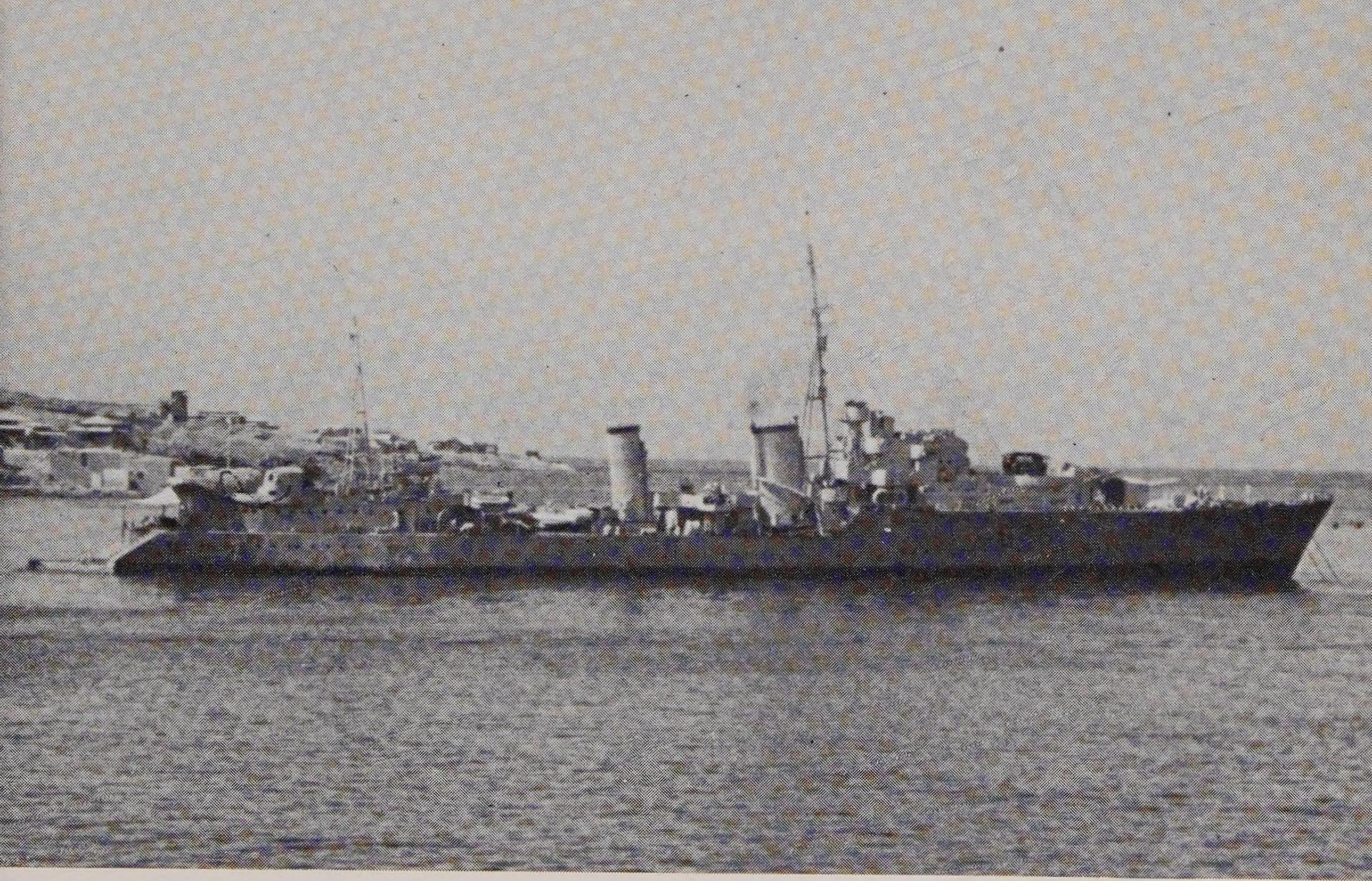


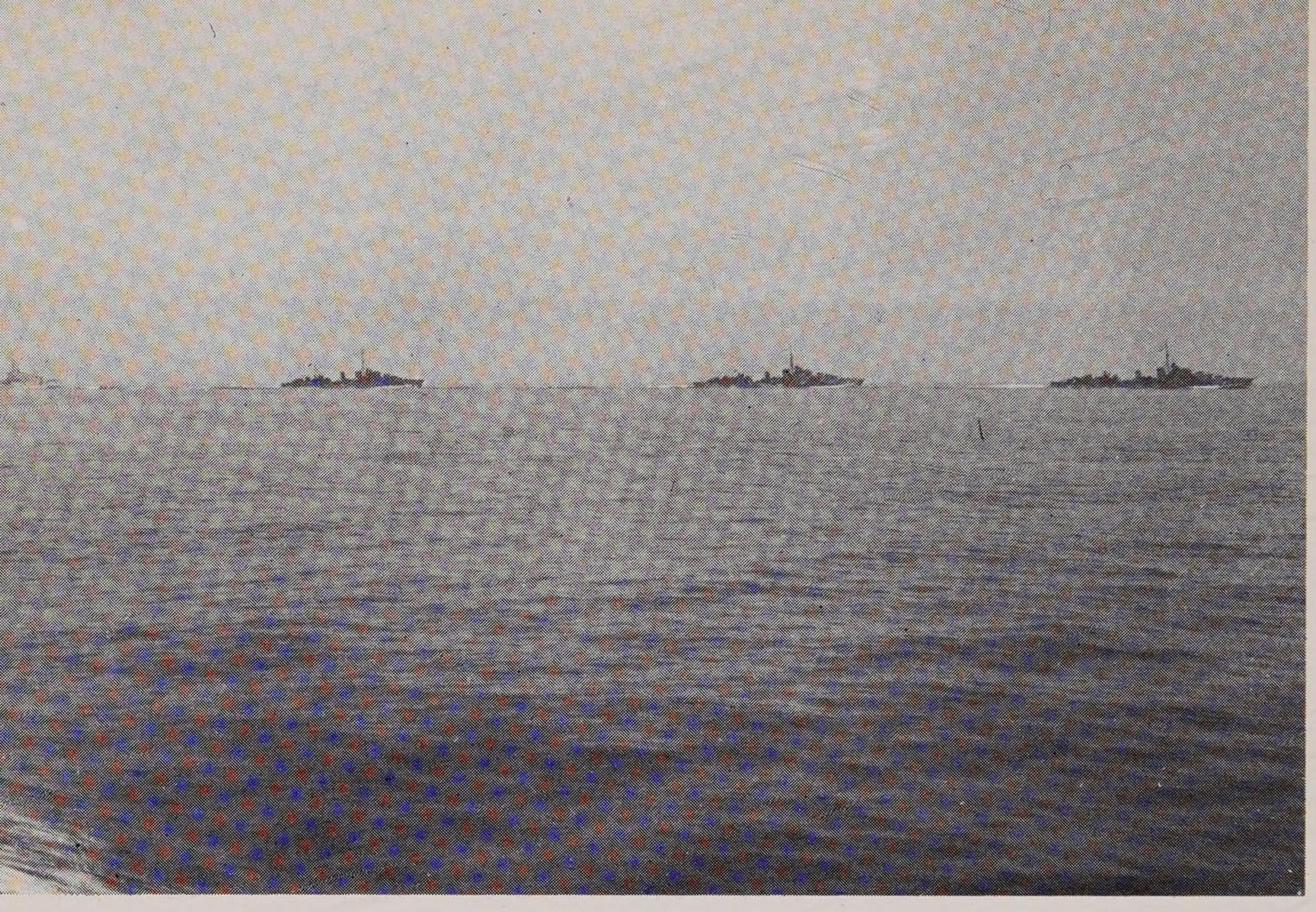
Mashona sinking on 28th May 1941. [*Ludovic Kennedy*

Top right: Matabele in August 1941 after her Barrow refit. [*IWM*

Right: Nubian at Port Tewfik in August 1941. A girder extends from her temporary stern to the rudder post. The 2pdrs. have been removed, probably because of the desperate need for close-range weapons in the Mediterranean. [*Admiral Sir Deric Holland-Martin*

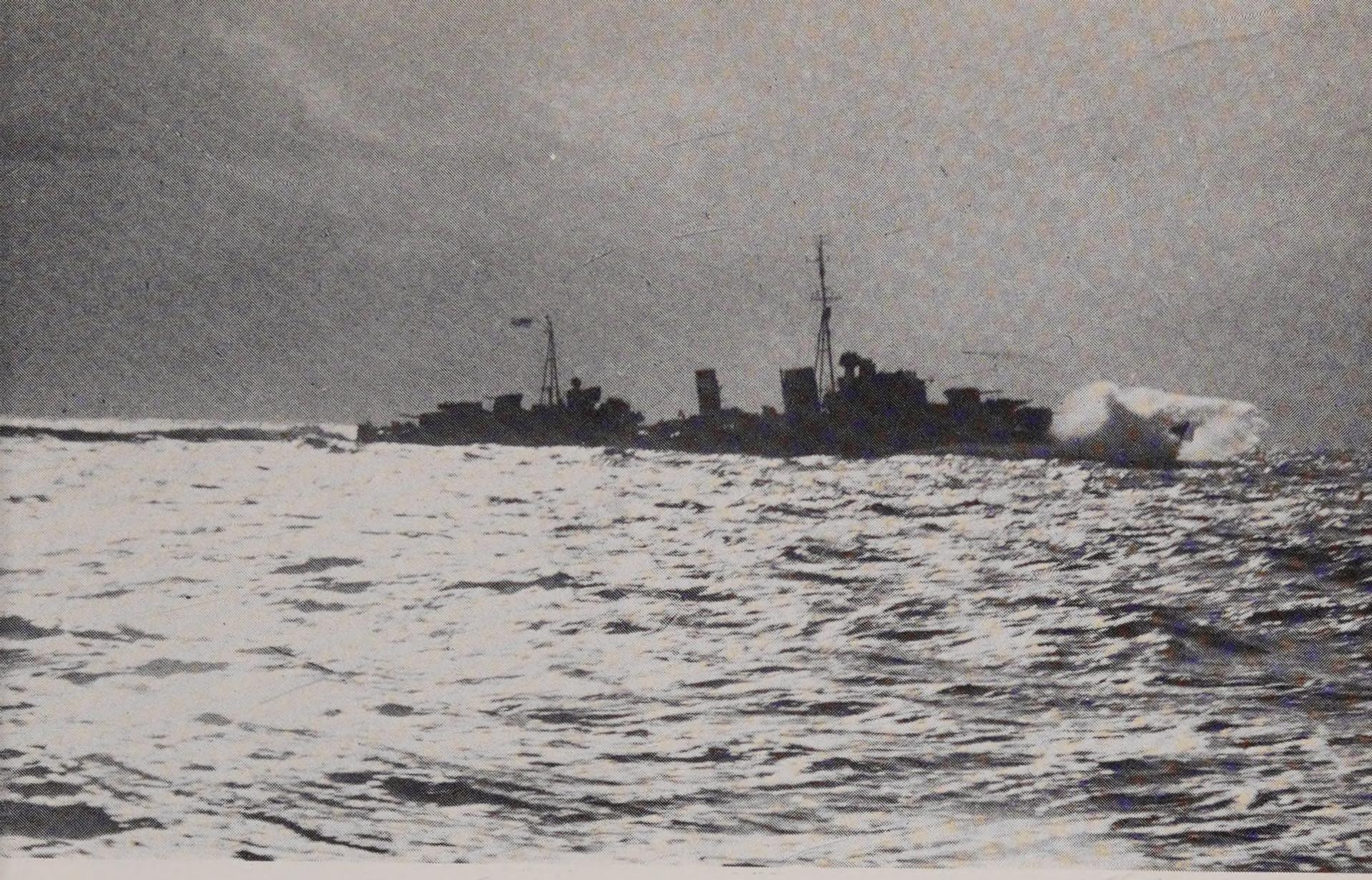






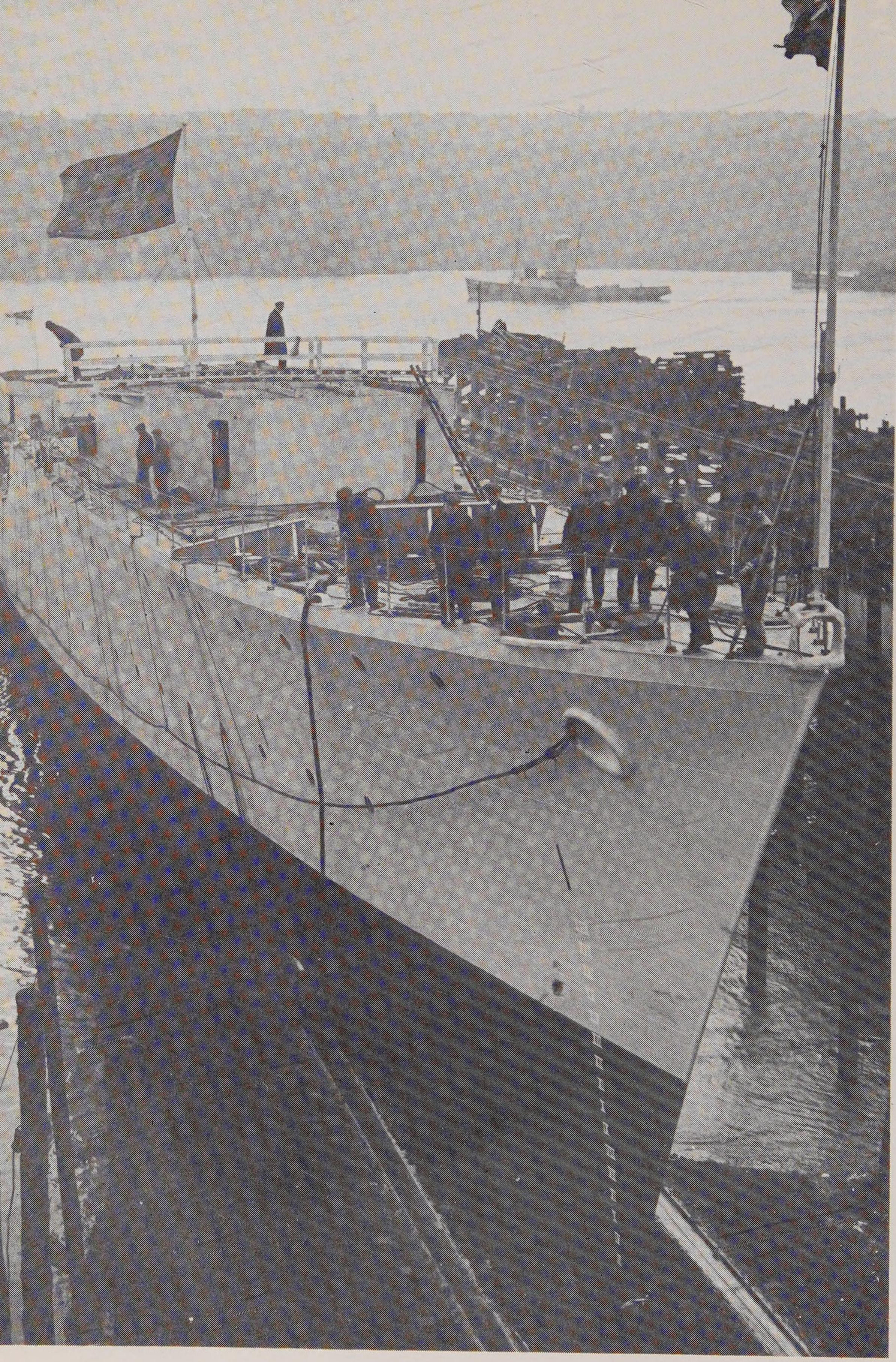
Zulu and the Halberd Malta convoy, September 1941. [*IWM*

Top: Ashanti, Matabele, Punjabi and *Eskimo* hurry across a northern sea. September 1941. [*IWM*



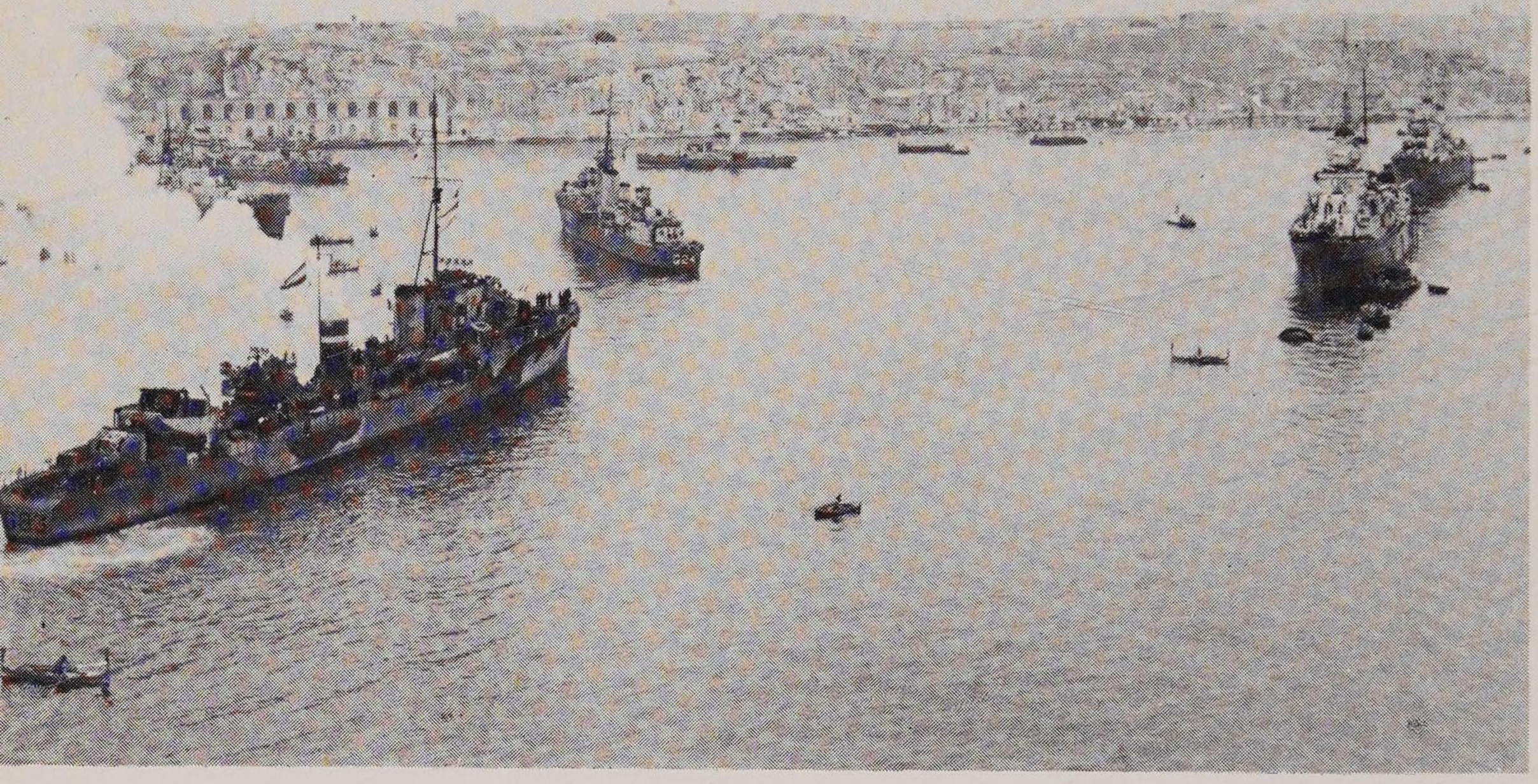
Zulu hove-to off Gibraltar while a doctor and his patient are transferred. November 1941.
[*IWM*

Top: Punjabi escorting *Victorious* for an air strike against Bodo on 9th October 1941.
[*IWM*



Wearing the Soviet flag, *Somali* heads for Scapa Flow with the Russian Ambassador on board. This photograph was taken from *Ashanti* on 8th December 1941. The cruiser *Edinburgh* is in the distance. [*IWM*

Left: The launch of a Tribal – *Athabaskan*, 15th November 1941. [*IWM*

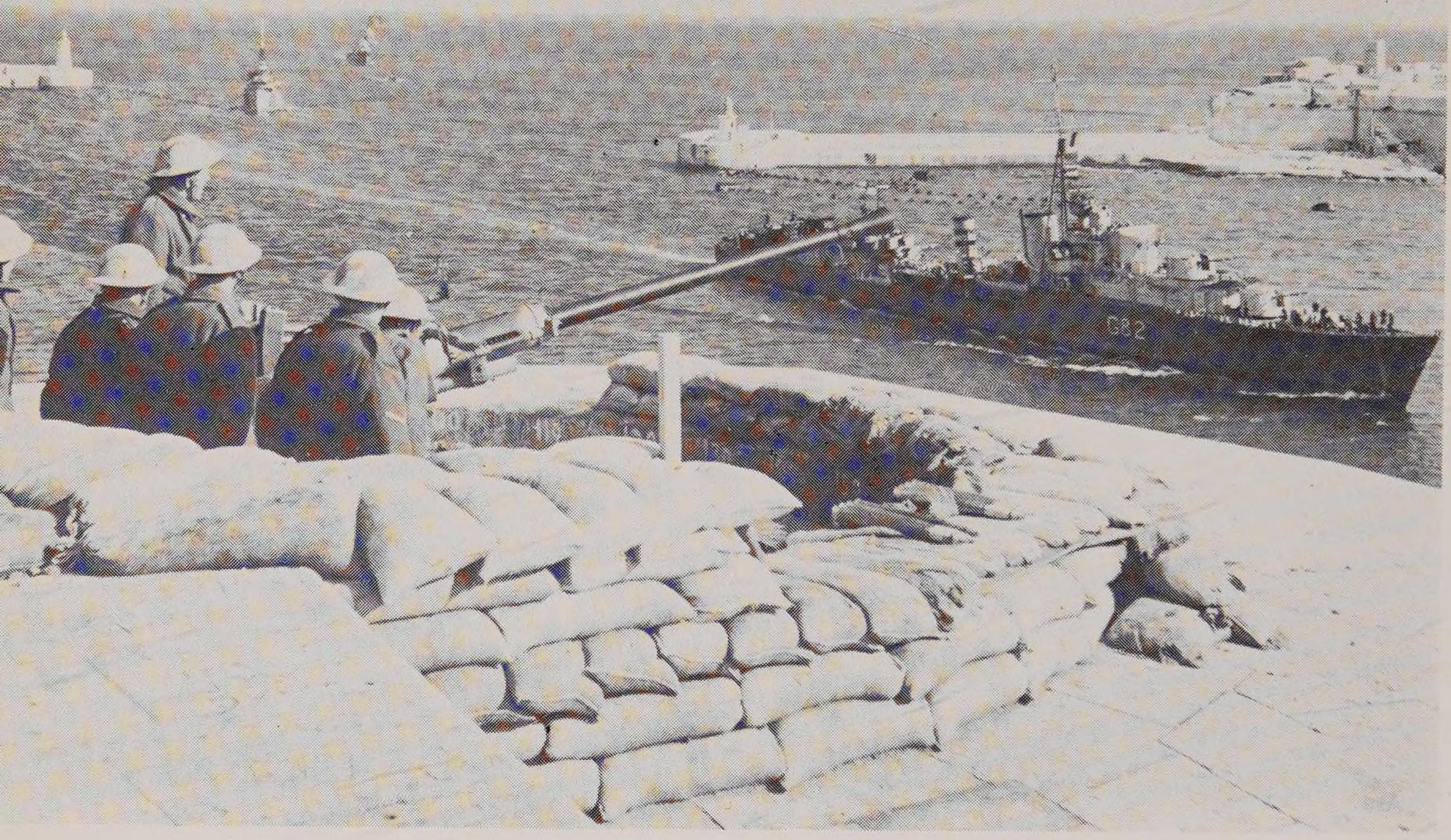


A destroyer performs many tasks. *Sikh* unloading mail at Malta on 14th December 1941. [*IWM*

Top: Isaac Sweers follows *Maori*, *Legion* and *Sikh* (beyond the smoke) into French Creek, Malta, on 14th December 1941 after sinking two Italian cruisers off Cape Bon. Note the cruisers of Force K on the right. [*IWM*

Kirkefiord, the secret base of Force Z, 27th December 1941. *Somali* is on the right. [*IWM*

Top: The Lofoten Islands, Boxing Day, 1941. *Ashanti* has just captured the German trawler *Geier*. *Somali* keeps anti-aircraft watch. [*IWM*



Punjabi and *Kent* practise oiling at Scapa Flow early in February 1942. [*IWM*

Top: Sikh leads the 14th DF and *Breconshire* into a beleaguered Malta, 8th January 1942. [*IWM*

Ashanti's gunners watch the departure of a Russian convoy in February 1942. [*IWM*

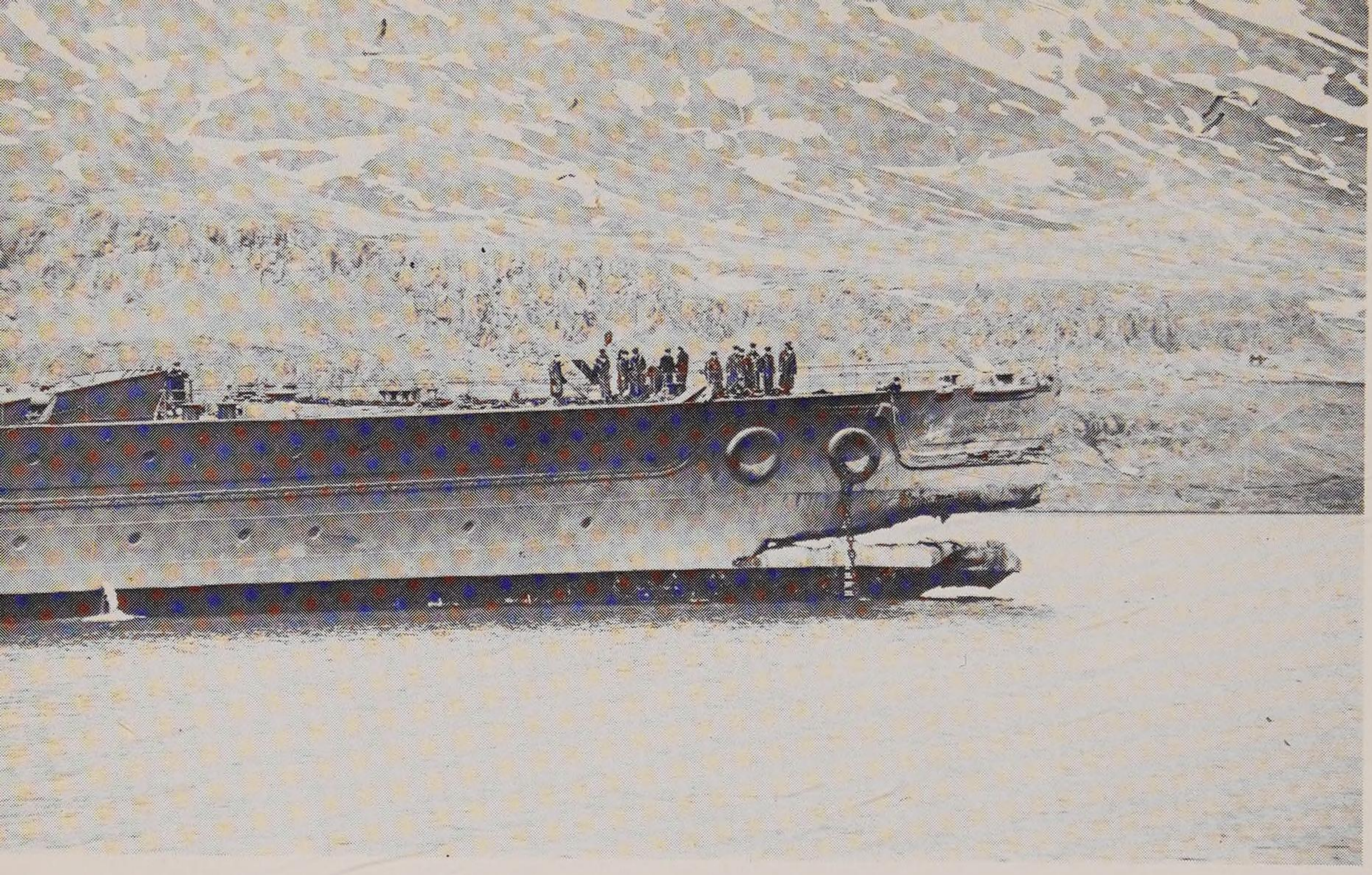
Top: Sludge-ice and frost-smoke in Seidisfiord. *Bedouin* in February 1942. [*IWM*

Maori still at the Emergency Destroyer Buoy at the entrance to French Creek. [*IWM*

Top: Harbour launches silhouetted against *Maori*'s flames. 0200, 12th February 1942. [*via V. J. Jackson*

Arunta running trials off Sydney in February 1942. Her AA armament is not yet complete. [*IWM*

Top: Watched by *Penelope* and screened by *Sikh*, *Zulu* takes *Rowallan Castle* in tow. It is now the late afternoon of 14th February 1942. The disabled merchantman will not see another dawn. [*via V. J. Jackson*



King George VI talking to Vice-Admiral Wells (Commanding Orkney and Shetlands) on *Somali*'s bridge during a visit to Scapa Flow early in June 1942. Captain Eaton is on the right. Note the signal book at far right. The ship is carrying out a routine asdic sweep, indicated by the 'Dome Lowered' warning notice. [*IWM*

Top: King George V arrives at Seidisfiord after colliding with *Punjabi* on 1st May 1942. [*IWM*

The convoy turned towards the North African coast escorted by the minesweepers and the MLs, while *Cairo* and the Hunts covered the port side of the convoy with smoke. At 0620 Commander Scurfield led the fleet destroyers out to engage the enemy. He later wrote to his wife "This was what I had been training for, for twenty-two years, and I led my five destroyers up towards the enemy. I was in a fortunate position in many ways, and I knew what we had to do. The cost was not to be counted. The ship was as ready for the test as we had been able to make her. I could do no more about it."

At 0700, *Bedouin* and the others raced through a smokescreen, closing the Italian cruisers to 5,000 yards. Overwhelming fire drove them back into the smoke again. *Cairo* had been hit, *Partridge* was stopped, *Bedouin*'s superstructure had been almost shot away and she too stopped, burning. They had inflicted some splinter damage on *Eugenio Di Savoia* and that was all, but the cruisers did not try to force their way through the dense smokescreens. *Lanzaretto Malocello* and *Ugolini Vivaldi* tried to edge round the smoke to get at the convoy, but they were held off by the Hunts and by fire from *Matchless* and *Marne*. The British destroyers were damaged but hit the two Italians hard. *Ugolini Vivaldi* was stopped and set on fire. There was further intermittent action, but the British ships lost touch with the enemy and were presently ordered to rejoin the convoy, now under air attack.

Bedouin and *Partridge* had been left behind, but at 0900 *Partridge* repaired her damage and got under way again. *Bedouin*'s damage was more serious. She had been hit twelve times, mainly by 6in shells, although not all of them had exploded. Splinters from one shell had perforated the gearing-casing and fire broke out in the gearing room so that the 4in and 2pdr magazines had to be flooded. Main and steering engines were dead and there was no electricity. The mast had been shot away, the primary fire-control wrecked and the bridge badly damaged. Still, Commander Scurfield hoped to have the electrical damage repaired and to get going again on one engine soon. In the meantime, *Partridge* took the Tribal in tow, *Bedouin*'s damaged bow making it difficult to rig a towing wire.

At first the two ships headed westward, but they were ordered to rejoin the convoy and they caught it up at 1142. The Bedouins stuffed hammocks and cushions in the holes near the waterline, cared for the wounded, burnt confidential documents, set the depth-charges at safe and jettisoned them.

Divebombers sank *Chant* at 1315 and damaged *Burdwan* and *Kentucky*, who were also taken in tow. One destroyer and two minesweepers were left with them and all the other ships headed at their best speed for Malta, braving mines and further air attacks. *Partridge* and *Bedouin* just could not keep up, so they turned round again and headed for Gibraltar.

Now the two Italian cruisers reappeared. They finished off *Burdwan* and *Kentucky* and they found *Partridge* and *Bedouin*. *Partridge* slipped the tow, made smoke and was chased away by *Raimondo Montecuccoli* and *Eugenio Di Savoia*, who again fired at *Bedouin* in passing. As they went by, *Bedouin* ignited her own smoke floats and got one engine moving. At the same instant an Italian torpedo-bomber raced in from star-

board at low-level, was hit by the destroyer's guns and crashed in the sea. The torpedo hit *Bedouin*'s engine room, blasting right through the ship. She rolled over to port and sank with the loss of 28 men.

At dusk 213 survivors were picked up by an Italian floatplane and a little hospital ship, being bombed by Italian aircraft during the rescue operation. The torpedo-bomber pilot was also saved. In later years the Bedouins were able to substantiate his claim that he, not the cruisers, had sunk their destroyer.

But that was for the future. They now faced years of captivity, firstly in Italy and then in Germany. They organised theatricals, they played sports, they studied, they escaped. May 1945 found them near Lübeck. The Allied armies were very close and their German guards marched them to and fro to avoid liberation. From the air, one column of marching men looks very much like another. Having come through so much, Commander Scurfield and two ratings were killed by two strafing RAF aircraft.

And so each year the *Bedouin* Reunion comes to an end. They drink a toast to "A Fine Ship and her Gallant Company" and go out into the streets of London.

Commanding Officers

Cdr J. A. McCoy, RN 1st March 1939 – 7th July 1941.
Cdr B. G. Scurfield, OBE, AM, RN 8th July 1941 – 15th June 1942.

Pennant Numbers

L67 August 1938 – December 1938
F67 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G67 Autumn 1940 – June 1942

HMCS Cayuga

First of name

Builders: Halifax Shipyards
Engined by: John Inglis, Halifax
Ordered: 1942
Laid Down: 7th October 1943
Launched: 28th July 1945
Commissioned: 20th October 1947

Although *Cayuga* was built on the east coast of Canada, she was intended for service on the Pacific coast. A skeleton crew carried out her acceptance trials the day after she was commissioned and she was then turned over to the dockyard electricians who installed her fire control equipment. This work was completed and tested by her full complement who had arrived from British Columbia. On 4th February 1948, *Cayuga* set out for Esquimalt.

There were lengthy calls at Bermuda (where she handed over victualling stores for *Haida*), Kingston, the Canal Zone, Manzanillo and Long Beach. Official calls and informal entertainment occupied their social time at these ports, but there was also a great deal of work to be done aboard *Cayuga*. Many steam leaks and other defects developed, the most serious being the complete breakdown of the port low-power turbine. Most of the passage to Esquimalt was on one engine at a maximum speed of eight knots.

Cayuga was docked as soon as she arrived on 22nd March, and repairs were not complete until 18th May. Ten days later Commander Robertson was put in charge of relief work in the Fraser Valley floods. He was accompanied by a number of *Cayuga*'s officers and men until the emergency was over on 15th June. *Cayuga* was drydocked for a routine refit from 5th July to 5th August, and then she was ready to begin a proper training programme. She accompanied *Athabaskan* in exercises and cruises until the end of the year when she was paid off for refit.

When *Cayuga* recommissioned on 15th September 1949, two triple-barrelled squid mountings had replaced 'Y' mounting, and besides the necessary extra gear and accommodation, the ship also boasted a modern laundry system. It took a long time for sea trials, tests and workups to sort out all the problems in the new gear, and it was not until late January 1950 that *Cayuga* was able to go on a fortnight's shakedown cruise to California. During this period she had also carried out a number of other tasks. She had taken the body of a retired naval officer for burial at sea, had ferried the RCN Ice-Hockey Team to Vancouver, and rescued a dog that fell into the water from a jetty at Esquimalt.

On 14th February, *Cayuga* searched for a B36 crew who had bailed out over

Hecate Strait. A fishing-boat found ten next day on Princess Royal Island and *Cayuga* then coordinated the search for the other missing men. Two more were rescued by *Cayuga*'s own shore parties, but the other five men were never seen again, even after nine days of searching. Returning from a 1950 cruise to tropical climes, the crew found a dead pelamis, or parti-coloured seasnake, in the bilges of the ship's motor-boat. The specimen was duly presented to the Victoria Museum.

After exercises and a refit, *Cayuga* joined *Athabaskan* in preparing for a cruise in European waters with the Canadian Special Service Squadron. This was cancelled when the Korean War began and *Cayuga*, under Captain Brock's command, became senior ship of the Canadian destroyers assigned to service in the Far East. Two of *Cayuga*'s twin 20mm mountings were replaced by single 40mm bofors, and *Cayuga* sailed with *Athabaskan*, *Sioux* and *Ontario* on 5th July.

Cayuga began her Korean operations on 3rd August, when she escorted *Brown Ranger* to refuel the warships off the west coast. Convoy escort duty between Sasebo and Pusan followed until the 15th. *Cayuga* had already looked for Communist junks at Yosu. She now joined *Mount's Bay* in shelling the harbour installations at the little port.

After three more convoy escort missions, *Cayuga* screened *Triumph* in the Yellow Sea until the 24th and then joined the west coast blockade off Kunsan and Inchon. Most of the junks and sampans she intercepted were fishing or carrying refugees. At the end of the month *Cayuga* carried out a bombardment with *Kenya* before returning to Sasebo where she remained until 11th September.

Cayuga worked on the west coast with *Athabaskan* for the next eleven days until she was forced to return to Sasebo for condenser repairs. These were completed on 3rd October and *Cayuga* then took the Canadian Chief of Naval Staff (Vice-Admiral Grant) to see the naval side of the Korean War. His tour ended, he disembarked at Tokyo and *Cayuga* went back to blockade patrols and carrier screening north of Inchon. The only incident was on the 19th, when the vigilance of *Cayuga*'s sonar operator saved her, and *Kenya* astern of her, from running into a minefield off Chodo.

Cayuga and *Athabaskan* enjoyed rest and relaxation at Hong Kong in November, and then carried out patrols in the Yalu Gulf. *Cayuga* was senior destroyer during the Chinnampo evacuation and also took part in the Inchon evacuation.

After completing a refit at Sasebo on 22nd January 1951 *Cayuga* was sent to the Inchon area. At midnight on the 24th, Captain Brock guided an American task force through the Inchon Channel and then withdrew to patrol offshore. At daylight *Cayuga* and *Nootka* went into Inchon to transfer liaison personnel to *USS St Paul*. Coming out, the two Tribals were fired on by batteries on Wolmi-do. The destroyers silenced the artillery with 4in and 40mm shells.

Cayuga and *Nootka* were then employed alternately on carrier escort and blockade patrols. *Nootka* sank a mine with 40mm fire and also rescued the pilot of a Sea Fury that ditched close by. *Cayuga* then returned to Inchon to provide gunfire support for the troops ashore. She was again fired at on the 30th, this time by six 76mm guns, which were promptly silenced by the combined fire of all the ships in the area.

The Japanese dockyard at Kure repaired *Cayuga*'s starboard screw from 5th to 12th February, and then she rejoined *Athabaskan* and the other members of the Windchasers Club in the Yellow Sea.

Cayuga's homeward voyage lasted from 16th March to 7th April and she began a refit which was completed on 25th May. On 19th June she again set out for the Far East. More working-up took place at Pearl Harbor and after a further call at Yokosuka to confer with *Nootka*, *Cayuga* arrived at Sasebo on 25th July. The same day she sailed to join *Glory*'s screen off the west coast of Korea. *Warramunga* and *Huron* were already there, and *Cayuga* shared in an attack on what was later identified as a non-sub sonar contact.

Cayuga departed Sasebo on 7th August on what proved to be quite an active patrol. After conferring with *Kenya* off the Haeju-man, she set out on the 8/9th to patrol inshore. Next morning *Cayuga* shelled troops and pillboxes on Pip'a-got. At noon she met the ROKN AMS512, treated one of her crew in the sickbay and provided her with five tons of fresh water

Back at Sok-to, Commander Plomer conferred with the local Donkey guerrilla leader, who pointed out gun-emplacements on Amgak which then received two hundred 4in shells from *Cayuga*. Just before anchoring at Chodo for the night, Commander Plomer learned that five sailing junks were going to raid Pungchon. At dawn the raiders got into difficulties, so *Cayuga* closed the shore to cover their withdrawal. She then shelled Pungchon and a group of soldiers crossing the mudflats.

Out at sea, *Cayuga* spent the rest of the morning clearing seaweed from her condenser inlets while AMS512 and AMS510 completed their promised sweep close to Amgak. *Cayuga* was now able to carry out an afternoon bombardment of artillery positions, bunkers and troop concentrations. The enemy guns replied but without effect.

Cayuga spent the rest of the month on carrier-screening, except when she sheltered from typhoon Marge at Inchon for four days.

On 2nd September, *Cayuga* was back at Sok-to. It was learned from the local Donkey that the Communists were now in the habit of hiding in the hills to avoid the daily shelling, returning to their barracks at night. It was therefore arranged that *Belfast* should take over the necessary longer-ranged daytime bombardments, while *Cayuga* carried out harassing fire with high explosive and incendiary shells at night.

On the 6th, *Cayuga* was ordered to investigate reports of junk traffic between Manchuria and North Korea. Many junks were sighted, but they were all either friendly, harmless, or close to the Chinese shore. *Cayuga* therefore returned to Chodo in time to help a guerrilla raid on the mainland. The raiders intended to bring back intelligence reports and provisions. *Cayuga* provided gunfire support at dawn on the 8th, and later her medical officer (Surgeon-Lieutenant J. C. Cyr) treated three seriously wounded ROK men including one with a bullet through his lungs. The casualties were later transferred to *Belfast*, the rest of the patrol was routine and *Cayuga* was relieved by *Sioux* on the 13th.

The bombardment of Wonsan, carrier screening on the west coast, drydocking at

Kure, a second bombardment of Wonsan, more carrier screening, repairs at Sasebo: and then it was 22nd October and Commander Plomer was conferring aboard *Belfast* at Taechong-do. During the meeting a B29 crashed on the island. All the crew were safe, but two were suffering from shock. Surgeon-Lieutenant Cyr was therefore sent ashore to treat them.

After routine patrols off Chinnampo, *Cayuga* searched in vain for a crashed aircraft off Taedong and was then ordered to Taewha-do. The island had just been bombarded and was expecting an invasion.

With the orders came the astonishing news that Surgeon-Lieutenant Cyr was an impostor. Although he had never given cause for complaint, and seemed quite competent, he had no medical qualifications at all. He was an American and his real name was Ferdinand Waldo Demara, Jnr. Apparently he had several times impersonated people with professional qualifications he did not possess. He was immediately relieved of his duties and the Sick Berth Petty Officer took over until a new medical officer arrived. Demara's story aroused such interest that a film called "The Great Impostor" was made about him. The *Cayuga* sequences were later filmed aboard *Athabaskan*.

When *Cayuga* arrived at Taewha-do on the 25th, the bombing casualties were treated and *Cayuga* then carried out a couple of bombardments on the enemy-held island of Sogacha-do. The next day she transferred the casualties to *Ceylon* at Chodo and embarked supplies and passengers for Taewha-do. *Cayuga* acted as a rescue ship during a B29 raid on the mainland on the 27th, but her services were not required. She was steaming south during the afternoon of the following day, when she shelled some gun emplacements. Later on she saw some people waving to her from the shore at Kujin-ni, but no action was taken.

On the 29th, *Cayuga* was approaching Taedong to evacuate a party of friendly guerrillas, when her echo-sounder broke down. She was therefore led in by her motor-cutter taking soundings with a lead line. As the boat neared the shore, a machine gun opened up, its bullets drenching the cutter's crew with water, but not injuring anyone. The cutter was recalled, *Cayuga* shelled the offending area and they left.

En route for Pengyong-do, Commander Plomer again noticed the same people waving from the shore near Kujin-ni. A boat was sent in and contact was made with a small band of guerrillas, virtually one family, living in a cave on the shore. They needed kerosene for cooking and this was duly provided.

It was on the next day, the 30th, that *Cayuga* anchored off Sok-to and was bracketted by the Amgak batteries, losing her anchor during her withdrawal. *Athabaskan* later prepared a trap for the Communist batteries, but they were not to be drawn.

From now until January 1952, *Cayuga* was involved in a whole range of island operations on the west coast, usually in company with *Athabaskan*. On 8th January, however, *Cayuga* began a lone patrol in the Haeju-man. She spent nine days bombarding the mainland and sinking enemy junks trying to invade friendly islands – a task complicated by similar numbers of identical junks carrying friendly refugees and

guerrillas to and from the islands. It proved impossible to prevent weak garrisons being overwhelmed by Communist guerrillas. *Cayuga* was also nearly hit by more accurate shore batteries, but this time escaped without losing an anchor. She also searched, unsuccessfully, for a missing airman off Changnin-do, and successfully for her own cutter, lost in fog off Yonpyong-do.

Cayuga left the area on 16th January and spent a period of recreation and self-maintenance at Hong Kong. The dockyard there replaced a burned out turbo-generator, and she arrived back in the Haeju-man on 12th February.

The rest of *Cayuga*'s Korean War service was quite quiet. She carried out several bombardments, screened carriers and frightened off guerrilla raids on friendly islands. Between patrols, *Cayuga* replenished at Sasebo and was also drydocked for hull inspection. Once, off the west coast she bumped into the US salvage tug *Ute* and once three shells were fired at her. There was so little excitement on these west coast patrols that the Haeju-man was known as "Plomer's Peaceful Paradise of Piety and Prudence".

Cayuga left Yokosuka on 1st June. On the 14th she arrived at Esquimalt and a month later had been completely destored and paid off into dockyard hands.

When she emerged on 23rd February 1953, *Cayuga* had been refitted as an escort destroyer. Her lattice steel foremast had been replaced by one of light-weight aluminium. Twin 3in/50 guns were mounted on the after superstructure instead of "X" mounting. She also had four single 40mm bofors. Her forward 4in guns, tubes and squid were the same as before, but her standard displacement was 2,200 tons and full load 2,745 tons.

Cayuga was engaged in trials, workups and shakedown cruises until November 1953. The period was not without incident. On 5th March, a misinterpreted order when docking meant that *Cayuga*'s engines went half-ahead instead of half-astern and drove her bows 25 feet into the jetty. *Cayuga* was only slightly damaged, but a few days later the engines failed altogether, again when berthing, and a collision was only just avoided. It is recorded that "henceforth the ship's return from sea invariably drew an interested audience".

Cayuga had to be drydocked from 23rd May to 28th June for repairs to her low-power turbines. In August she acted as guardship, patrolling the route of the Seattle-Vancouver Power Boat Regatta.

Although the Korean War was over, warships were still needed there to prevent breaches of the armistice. So on 25th November, *Cayuga* again sailed for the west coast of Korea, arriving there on 8th January 1954. She found that she had little to do, for the actual work of preventing Communist infiltration was carried out by small ROKN vessels. The larger UN ships were there "in case . . .". For the most part it was a period of exercises and completely uneventful patrols. *Cayuga*, *Haida* and *Crusader* were visited by the Prime Minister, Mr St Laurent at Tokyo on 12th March. They went to Hong Kong, and to Nagasaki, and they arranged a party for an orphanage on Pengyong-do.

There were typhoons to be avoided and resorts to be visited. 23rd/24th August

saw the voyage of the whaler *Cayuga Maru* from Shimonseki, through the Shimonoseki Straits to Beppu, where the little boat met her parent ship again. Funnel cowls were fitted in September, *Cayuga*'s complement being much intrigued by the intricate bamboo and straw rope scaffolding erected by the Japanese dockyard workers around the funnels. On 1st October, *Cayuga* rushed a man from a US minesweeper to hospital at Inchon. The 140-mile approach channel was navigated by radar and echo-sounder in six hours.

Cayuga arrived back at Esquimalt on 16th December, being refitted from 3rd January to 25th February 1955. For the next four years she remained based on the west coast of Canada, being accompanied on most cruises and exercises by *Athabaskan*. There was one distasteful incident in April 1955 when $14,522 were stolen from the Ship's Public Funds Money Chest. Later two ex-seamen were convicted of the theft.

There were the usual annual dockings, but *Cayuga* also underwent a major refit from time to time. She had to be docked for rudder repairs in April 1956 and for a leaking fuel tank early in June 1956. She suffered a serious boiler room fire in September 1958, and two men were badly burned.

In January 1959, *Cayuga* and *Athabaskan* transferred to the east coast and the two Tribals remained based at Halifax for the rest of their lives. In fact they were in company for much of the time visiting North American and European ports.

However, *Cayuga* was with *Micmac* on 24th November 1959, practising a jackstay transfer off Bermuda, when the two ships brushed together. *Cayuga*'s port motor-cutter was stove in and there was other superficial damage. *Micmac* had several frames bent, one bulkhead was cracked and two others damaged. Other minor mishaps during *Cayuga*'s last years included a condenser inlet full of seaweed, and a buoy cable round the starboard propeller.

At the end of February 1964, *Cayuga* was paid off, destored and scheduled for disposal. In October 1964 she arrived at Faslane for breaking up.

Commanding Officers

Cdr O. C. S. Robertson, GM, RD, RCN 20th October 1947 – 1st January 1949.
Cdr M. A. Medland, RCN 15th September 1949 – 4th July 1950.
Capt J. V. Brock, DSO, DSC, CD, RCN 5th July 1950 – 24th May 1951.
Cdr J. Plomer, OBE, DSC, CD, RCN 25th May 1651 – 18th June 1952.
Lt-Cdr W. P. Hayes, CD, RCN 23rd February 1953 – 31st December 1954.
Cdr G. H. Davidson, CD, RCN, 1st January 1955 – 16th October 1956.
Cdr P. C. Benson, CD, RCN 17th October 1956 – 16th April 1958.
Lt-Cdr G. A. Hoyte, CD, RCN 17th April 1958 – 23rd June 1958.
Cdr M. H. E. Page, CD, RCN 23rd June 1958 – 1st March 1959.
Cdr E. Petley-Jones, CD, RCN 2nd March 1959 – 13th December 1960.
Lt-Cdr F. J. Dunbar, RCN 14th December 1960 – 2nd August 1961.
Cdr D. C. Rutherford, RCN 3rd August 1961 – 1st February 1962.
Cdr W. M. Beckett, RCN 2nd February 1962 – 28th February 1964.

Pennant Numbers

R04 September 1947 – October 1949
DDE218 November 1949 – October 1964

HMS Cossack

Sixth of name

Builders: Vickers-Armstrong, High Walker Yard, The Tyne
Engined by: Vickers-Armstrong, Barrow-in-Furness
Ordered: 10th March 1936
Laid Down: 9th June 1936
Launched: 8th June 1937 (by Mrs S. V. Goodall)
Commissioned: 14th June 1938

"Grenville of the Revenge", "England Expects . . .", "Evans of the Broke". To these illustrious names and phrases, the Second World War added "The Navy's Here" and "Vian of the *Cossack*".

Thanks to her activities under the command of Captain Vian, *Cossack* was the most famous of all the Tribals. "The Daily Mirror Ship" her flotilla mates called her. But the star had an unfortunate debut when she made her first appearance at Portsmouth on 12th June 1938. She dented her brand-new bows coming alongside the jetty.

Cossack's early programme in the Mediterranean soon after her arrival in July 1938 paralleled *Afridi*'s. First the new destroyer was opened to visitors from Gozo. Then there were exercises and cruises and Spanish Civil War patrols. Italian aircraft flew over at dawn and dusk, but otherwise all was uneventful until 22nd August. *Cossack* was ordered to Barcelona to collect the British consul there. As she could not enter the port because of the fighting, *Cossack* anchored off the neighbouring resort of Caldetas, sending her whaler to take the consul off the beach. Unfortunately, being rather an elderly gentleman, he slipped and broke his leg as he was getting into the boat. *Cossack* had to rush him to hospital at Marseilles, making 30 knots for most of the passage.

In September *Cossack* accompanied *Afridi* on a visit to Istanbul, which was cut short by the Munich crisis. The two Tribals remained in company for the rest of the year, and even in 1939 were still together frequently for flotilla and fleet exercises. Being leader of the 8th Division however, *Cossack* often took *Maori*, *Zulu* and *Nubian* off on their own schemes. For example, from 1/2nd to 6th August, *Cossack*'s destroyers escorted Admiral Cunningham in *Warspite* on another goodwill visit to Istanbul. This cruise was a success and the ships rejoined the Mediterranean Fleet off Cyprus.

The outbreak of the War found *Cossack*'s division at Alexandria. The next day they patrolled off Crete and then went on to Malta. On 10th September they picked up their first convoy. French troops were being moved from Marseilles and Algiers to Beirut and the 8th Division was employed on this escort duty until 2nd October.

They took one section into Malta, and then took another convoy right through to Alexandria returning to Malta to take over another convoy. Somehow it often seemed that these blacked-out groups of ships were usually closely followed by brilliantly lit Italian merchantmen.

Afridi and *Gurkha* had already returned to England, so *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Mohawk*, *Zulu* and *Nubian* followed, arriving on 13th October. *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Mohawk* and *Zulu* immediately began escorting east coast convoys. Three days later they had just left one off the Forth and were heading for Rosyth when they experienced their first air raid. British aircraft were in the area and the Tribals had been instructed not to open fire without positive identification. Fire was opened too late, and *Mohawk* was badly damaged.

Cossack was engaged on more convoy escort until 7/8th November. That night she collided with one of the merchant ships in her charge. Four men were killed in *Cossack* and *Zulu* sent across a party to help free one of the casualties trapped in plating curled back by the impact. *Cossack* was repaired in Leith and so missed the events of 21st November.

Several Tribals were escorting *Belfast* out from Rosyth for exercises when a violent underwater explosion stopped the big cruiser dead. The destroyers hunted a suspected U-boat, but it was later learned that the damage had been caused by a magnetic mine. *Belfast*'s back was broken and she was towed slowly back to Rosyth under escort.

In January 1940, *Afridi* went in for repairs, so her captain, Captain Vian, exchanged ships with Commander Sherbrooke. *Cossack* was now leader of the 4th DF for the time being.

On 14th February, there was an interruption in the routine of patrols and convoys. *Cossack* and various other ships of the 4th DF were lying at Rosyth when extra men were sent across from *Aurora* to replace those suffering from influenza. These replacements were organised into boarding parties. At midnight *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Sikh*, *Nubian*, *Intrepid*, *Ivanhoe* and *Arethusa* sailed, ostensibly to intercept German iron-ore ships in the Skagerrak and also to report on ice conditions in the area. On the 15th, Captain Vian, who was force commander, received reports that the 13,580-ton German supply tanker *Altmark* had been sighted off Trondheim. Her guns had been removed and she was posing as a merchant tanker so that she could pass through the channels between the Norwegian offshore islands and the mainland.

These Leads were Norwegian territorial waters, but *Altmark*'s voyage was quite legal if she were a genuine merchant ship. However, there were reports that she was carrying 300 British merchant seamen, taken by the pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* from the prizes she had sunk or captured. If *Altmark* tried to carry these internees through Norwegian territorial waters it would be an infringement of Norway's rights. *Altmark* must therefore release the internees, or she herself must be interned, or she must sail outside Norwegian territorial waters – where she could be intercepted by the Royal Navy. Of course, if she were a genuine merchant ship then the RN had no right to enter Norwegian territorial waters to stop her. It was perhaps legally doubtful whether the RN could enter Norwegian territorial waters even if *Altmark* were

a regular warship, packed with British prisoners, and was there illegally herself.

The first problem, however, was to find *Altmark* and Captain Vian's force split up to search the Leads and offshore islands. Nobody had a very clear idea what *Altmark* looked like, so every supply ship was investigated – a procedure which took some time if the vessel was close inshore against a background of snow and rock.

At last on 16th February, *Altmark* was intercepted by *Arethusa*, *Intrepid* and *Ivanhoe*. A warning shot was fired across her bows, but Norwegian warships hampered the Navy's efforts to force *Altmark* out of territorial waters. The German tanker turned and hid in Jossingfiord – a narrow inlet almost covered in places with quite thick ice. There were soon three Norwegian warships (the torpedo boats *Trygg* and *Kjell* and the patrol boat *Firern*) in the area.

Captain Vian arrived at dusk to confer with a Norwegian officer who explained that *Altmark* had been searched at Bergen. Nothing amiss had been found. Captain Vian reported to the Admiralty and awaited their reply. Presently orders arrived directly from the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr Winston Churchill. Captain Vian was to offer to help the Norwegians escort *Altmark* back to Bergen to be searched again. If they refused then *Altmark* must be boarded. If the Norwegians interfered they must be warned off. If they opened fire, it must not be returned unless necessary, and then only as much as necessary.

At 2200 Captain Vian took *Cossack* into the fiord; his next few decisions and actions might have started a war. He communicated the sense of Mr Churchill's message to *Kjell* who replied that he could not cooperate because his little ships were unable to force their way through the ice.

At 2312 *Cossack*, with a boarding party of three officers and thirty ratings ready, approached *Altmark*. The big tanker switched on her searchlights to dazzle *Cossack*'s bridge personnel and tried to crash her heavy stern into the destroyer's thin plates. Expert shiphandling saved *Cossack* from damage. As the two ships brushed together, some of the boarding party leaped across. *Cossack* closed again, the rest followed and *Cossack* backed clear.

Four Germans were killed and five wounded in a brisk action before *Altmark* was seized. Only one of the boarding party was injured. Two British officers dived into the icy water to rescue a German who had fallen overboard, but he was dead when they picked him up. Other Germans escaped across the ice-floes and reached the shore.

Meanwhile the boarding party had secured *Altmark*'s bridge and stopped her engines, but the tanker's momentum carried her on and she ran aground. Then the search for prisoners began. A hold was opened up.

"Are there any Englishmen down there?"

A clamorous rejoinder.

"Then come up. The Navy's here."

299 captives were released and transferred to the destroyer. All the Germans were left behind and at 2355 Captain Vian and *Cossack* sailed out of Jossingfiord into the world's headlines.

Meanwhile the destroyers waiting outside the fiord had intercepted the 5,805-ton *Baldur*, a German iron-ore ship which had scuttled herself. The force returned to the UK covered by the Home Fleet, and the released prisoners were landed at Leith. *Cossack* had to be docked for her propeller and A-brackets to be checked in case they had been damaged by the thick ice in the fiord. They were unharmed, but *Cossack*'s stem plating had to be repaired where it had been bumping against *Altmark*.

The *Altmark* Incident was definitely an infringement of Norway's neutrality by both Britain and Germany. Neutral countries could no longer be certain of their inviolability in this war. The British were heartened by decisive action during the Phoney War, while Hitler was furious and ordered his plans for Operation Weserübung (the invasion of Scandinavia) to be pushed ahead. After they had conquered Norway, the Germans erected a commemorative board in Jossingfiord reading (in German) "Here on 16th Feb. 1940 the *Altmark* was set upon by a British sea-pirate."

After the *Altmark* Incident Captain Vian returned to *Afridi* and the destroyers reverted to their North Sea patrols and convoy escort duties, as well as preparing for Operation Wilfred. Then on the night of 7/8th April, *Cossack* left Rosyth with other ships of the 4th DF. About 0500, *Kelvin* and *Kashmir* collided, so *Cossack* and *Zulu* were ordered to stand by them. The damaged ships got under way again at dawn. *Zulu* led followed by *Kelvin*, steaming stern first because of her damaged bow. *Cossack* brought up the rear towing *Kashmir* who could not steer. At first they were circled by a Norwegian seaplane and then *Zulu* got an asdic contact ahead. The U-boat broke surface, but dived again as *Zulu* attacked. One pattern of depth-charges was dropped, and U-99 made off.

The destroyers arrived safely back at Lerwick where *Cossack* and *Zulu* topped up with oil and left before dark. Both Tribals were ordered to join the forces off Northern Norway, *Cossack* taking part in the 2nd Battle of Narvik on 13th April. She suffered serious damage and ran aground, being unable to get off until the early hours of the morning.

Once she had limped into Skelfiord the first task was to make the messdecks habitable. Then all spare ammunition was taken across to *Zulu*, while torpedoes were transferred to *Bedouin*. Repairs took several days, and were mainly carried out by Norwegian civil and marine engineers. As a 'thank-you', the Cossacks gave a tea-party for all the children at Skelfiord. At last repairs were complete and *Cossack* left escorting the empty tanker *British Lady*.

In spite of her slow speed, bad weather caused serious flooding forward and a continuous bucket chain had to be organised for the rest of the voyage. At long last *Cossack* arrived at Portsmouth on 30th April. She was immediately destored and taken round to Southampton for major repairs at Thornycroft's.

Besides refitting battle damage, 'X' mounting was replaced by twin 4in AA guns. This was the period of Dunkirk. There was no time to waste and some dockyard men were still on board when she went back to war on 15th June. Captain Vian had now assumed command again and *Cossack* became the permanent leader of the 4th DF. A variety of fleet escort tasks followed. On 24th June, *Cossack* met *Emerald*

off Greenock and escorted her out into the Atlantic. The next day the weather was very rough. For safety from U-boats, the cruiser zigzagged at a higher speed astern of the destroyers who were steering a straighter course at a slower speed. Even so, the seas became so violent that the destroyers turned back and *Emerald* went on alone taking £130,000,000-worth of gold and securities across the Atlantic.

Cossack arrived back at Scapa Flow on 26th June, topped up with fuel and left immediately for a sweep off Norway. They were investigated by a Dornier flying-boat and then attacked by He111s – a suitable opportunity for carrying out 4in gunnery trials.

On 6th July, the submarine *Shark* was damaged on a North Sea patrol and at midnight *Cossack* led three destroyers out to bring her back. But *Shark* had already sunk and at 1015 the next morning aircraft appeared over the destroyers who opened fire. Me110s were approaching but they were chasing two Blenheims. These two were the planes that were hit by naval AA fire and both were shot down. *Cossack*'s whaler picked up three airmen from the nearer Blenheim and then He111s arrived. They bombed from high altitude for the rest of the day and continued raiding Rosyth after the destroyers had arrived.

Ten days later *Cossack* sailed from Scapa Flow in a force of cruisers and destroyers which tried to intercept German ships reported off Denmark. Fog blanketted the North Sea and the British ships were recalled. Entering the Pentland Firth that night and still in thick fog, the destroyer *Imogen* was sunk in a collision with *Glasgow*.

Cossack spent August at Scapa Flow waiting for action and then moved to Rosyth. After various defects had been repaired, Captain Vian exercised the 4th DF in attacking the invasion fleet which must surely come. He planned to get right in amongst the assault craft so that the enemy aircraft could not bomb the British destroyers without hitting their own vessels. The Tribals also practised torpedo-attacks on a single capital ship – there might be no immediate call for such an evolution, but it might come in useful in the future.

More active service occurred on 13/14th October when *Cossack* took *Ashanti*, *Sikh* and *Maori* to attack a German convoy off Norway. A shell-hole in *Cossack* was the only British damage in a very successful action.

After this operation the Tribals returned to their more routine duties. They investigated reports of U-boats off Ireland and German capital ships off Iceland. They escorted transatlantic troopships and fast convoys on the Gibraltar run. They covered minelaying operations off Iceland, intended to deter German surface vessels from using the Northern routes into the Atlantic. The big ships kept at high speed because of the danger from U-boats. In rough weather, which seemed predominant, this speed resulted in much damage to escorting destroyers, who often had to wait until they were steering away from wind and sea before changing watches. Often men were swept overboard – a fortunate few being washed back again farther aft. On one occasion three men were securing a boat alongside *Cossack*'s forefunnel when they were washed over the side. Only one was found later – in the tiller flat. They spent Christmas Day escorting *Hood* and *Edinburgh* in thick fog north-east of the

Shetlands, and they had to wait until New Year's Eve before an official celebration in harbour.

Cossack began 1941 with a refit in Thornycroft's yard at Southampton. It lasted from 7th January to 20th February, and was mainly devoted to repairing weather damage which the depot ship and floating dock at Scapa Flow had tried to put right temporarily. *Cossack*'s bottom, corrugated by high speed in rough weather, was straightened, and fo'c'sle doors and ammunition hatches made watertight again. Leaks in reserve water tanks were stopped and accommodation rearranged for an enlarged complement of 226. Most novel was the gadget that appeared at the fore topmast head – the aerial for type 286M radar.

There were more convoys to be escorted in the Western Approaches after this refit. On 21st May, *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Sikh*, *Zulu* and *Piorun* left the Clyde helping to escort the troop convoy WS8B to Gibraltar. There was a dawn bombing attack by a lone Fw200 on the 23rd. One liner was hit and stopped, and the whole convoy waited while she got going again at reduced speed.

That day the German battleship *Bismarck* was located far away in the Denmark Strait. This event seemed to have little bearing on WS8B, but the loss of *Hood* and *Bismarck*'s subsequent alteration of course changed that. Then on the 25th, *Bismarck* was lost. She might soon be closing the convoy so Captain Vian stationed *Cairo* 30 miles off to give advance warning of *Bismarck*'s approach.

At 0330 on the 26th, the Admiralty ordered Captain Vian to leave WS8B and meet Home Fleet battleships whose own destroyers were running short of fuel. Accordingly *Cossack*, *Sikh* and *Zulu* set off to join *King George V*, accompanied by *Maori* and *Piorun* who would screen *Rodney*.

At 1036 Captain Vian took in the aircraft sighting signal reporting *Bismarck*'s newly found position. Without breaking radio silence, he decided to head for that instead of for the British battleships.

Suppose the Tribals did not find *Bismarck* . . .?

Suppose *King George V* and *Rodney*, bereft of destroyer escort, were torpedoed, even sunk . . .?

The decision had been made. The 4th DF tried to make full speed, but poor visibility and a rising gale kept their speed down to 27 knots. Even at that they were yawing all over the place, sometimes up to 140° off course. Men were thrown against bulkheads and equipment, and injured. *Sikh* lost one man overboard. Commander Stokes whipped the ship round in two minutes and tried to rescue him but the figure sank 30 yards away and the destroyers plunged on.

At 2100 they sighted the carrier *Ark Royal*.

2152: They sighted *Sheffield* and were directed towards *Bismarck*, the cruiser hoping to back up the destroyers' torpedo attacks.

2200: *Piorun* on the port wing, sighted *Bismarck*. Captain Vian ordered the destroyers to take up a square box formation around *Bismarck* with *Cossack* astern of her. They would thus be able to shadow and/or carry out torpedo attacks.

Their opponent had a full load displacement of 50,900 tons and carried eight 15in, twelve 5.9in, sixteen 4.1in, sixteen 37mm and twelve 20mm guns.

2238: *Piorun* and *Bismarck* opened fire at each other, the Polish destroyer remaining under fire until she was out of range at 2308.

2324: Although the destroyers were now in position the weather was too bad for them to carry out co-ordinated torpedo attacks. At 18 knots they could hardly see through the spray. It was a thick cloudy night with no moon and they therefore had to carry out independent attacks. Often they lost touch altogether, or were driven off by *Bismarck*'s radar-controlled 15in and 5.9in gunfire.

2342: *Cossack*, four miles from *Bismarck* was nearmissed by 15in and 5.9in shells. One 15in shell exploded so close that splinters carried away *Cossack*'s radio aerials and damaged a motor-boat. *Cossack* sheered off.

2345: *Zulu* was straddled by three 15in salvoes. Splinters wounded three of her crew and smashed a deck insulator. From then on that night, whenever *Zulu* was transmitting, the sparks lit up the whole ship.

0020: *Sikh* came under fire. She had been shadowing *Bismarck* from astern and had just got into a favourable position but 15in shell splashes prevented torpedoes being fired, so *Sikh* sheered off. As she did so, *Maori*, nearmissed by the overs fired at *Sikh*, made contact.

0030: *Maori* lost touch.

0040: *Cossack*, *Zulu* and *Piorun* made contact with each other and Captain Vian ordered the others to intercept separately. As they broke away *Maori* fired star-shell to try to light up *Bismarck*.

0100: *Zulu* sighted *Bismarck*.

0120: *Zulu* came under fire at 5,000 yards.

0122: *Zulu* fired four torpedoes. None hit.

0137: *Maori* fired more starshell and then two torpedoes. She came under fire again and was damaged by splinters. Commander Armstrong was also injured that night and the compass dislocated when the destroyer was thrown about by a particularly heavy sea. As *Maori* broke away it looked as if both her torpedoes had hit.

0140: *Cossack* fired three torpedoes from 6,000 yards. It was believed that two hit.

0218: *Sikh* had approached to 7,000 yards when *Bismarck* appeared to stop. All four torpedoes were fired and one hit was reported.

0230: The C-in-C ordered the 4th DF to fire starshell and make MF/DF transmissions to show *Bismarck*'s position, but the destroyers were driven off again by the battleship's fire. Even so, the starshell and other 4.7in gunfire, although ineffective, helped to create more alarms aboard *Bismarck*.

0300: *Cossack* fired her last torpedo at 4,000 yards. All destroyers lost touch with their quarry and could not find her again.

0500: Captain Vian ordered *Piorun* back to base to refuel, but the Poles stayed, trying to locate *Bismarck*. It would soon be light and she must be found and delivered to the approaching Home Fleet battleships.

0550: *Maori* regained contact with *Bismarck* and shadowed her.

0600: *Piorun* left. She was bombed and badly damaged while returning to Plymouth alone.

0620: *Sikh* made contact with *Bismarck*.

0700: *Maori* fired her last two torpedoes at 9,000 yards just as it was getting light. *Bismarck* straddled her and Captain Vian stationed his destroyers in a square around the battleship. (Later, survivors' reports would discount all torpedo hits claimed by the 4th DF. The flashes and spray seen by the destroyers had been *Bismarck*'s own gunfire, and waves breaking over her. Even if any torpedoes had hit no damage had been done. Yet the 4th DF had remained in touch for most of the night and had certainly helped to weary *Bismarck*'s crew.)

At 0800 *King George V*, *Rodney* and their destroyers arrived on the scene and were guided towards their cornered quarry by *Maori*. *Dorsetshire* was directed in by *Cossack* at 0823.

At 0847 the battleships opened fire and for ninety minutes pounded *Bismarck* until she was a blazing, wallowing, defenceless hulk – but still afloat. Aboard *Sikh* "sailors crowded up onto the bridge and directors, everywhere where a point of vantage could be obtained to watch the fight. It was like a football crowd watching their home team win the cup. The enthusiasm was terrific, and the inevitable Cockney comments, mostly at the expense of our battleships were worth hearing. The opening stages of the action were rather exciting, but once it was clear that the result could not be in doubt, it was a most murderous performance."

Leaving *Dorsetshire* to finish off the wreck with torpedoes, *King George V* and *Rodney* steamed away, escorted by *Cossack*, *Sikh* and *Zulu*. *Maori* and *Dorsetshire* followed after picking up 24 and 80 *Bismarck* survivors respectively. The Home Fleet ships were warned of the approach of large formations of aircraft but there were only three attacks, one fairly near *Zulu*, one stick of bombs two miles astern and more bombs dropped far ahead on the horizon. The weight of the German attack fell upon *Tartar* and *Mashona* forty miles away.

On the 28th the force split up, *Cossack* and *Zulu* taking *King George V* through fog to Loch Ewe, while *Rodney*, *Maori*, *Sikh* and *Columbia* went to the Clyde. They all arrived the next day.

For a while the 4th DF was attached to the Home Fleet, but they soon returned to Western Approaches duties and at the beginning of July were sent to Plymouth, to defend coastal convoys against raids by German destroyers and E-boats from Brittany. More rapid fire-power was needed against these fast moving targets so *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Sikh* and *Zulu* had single 2pdr guns mounted on each side of the bridge.

This was a fairly quiet period, one of the more serious incidents concerning the salinity of *Cossack*'s boilers. It sometimes happened that engine room bilgewater leaked into the reserve feed-water tanks, but one day contamination was so serious that *Cossack* had to return to Plymouth. Entering the Sound, the source of the trouble was tracked down.

There was salt water cooling to some bearing in the gearing-room. This was quite normal and so too was the fact that this water was drained into the engine room bilges. However, a tidy-minded watchkeeper had decided it would be neater to lead the waste water into an adjacent pig's ear – which drained fresh water into the feed-water tanks. On such minor matters do the safety of ships and the outcome of battles depend.

On the 14th, *Cossack*, *Maori* and *Sikh* arrived at Gibraltar to take part in Operation Substance, the reinforcement of Malta's garrison to repel an expected airborne assault. *Ark Royal* also usually took advantage of such operations to fly aircraft into Malta.

They embarked some troops from the *SS Pasteur* and left at 0426 on the 21st with *Manchester* and *Arethusa*. They should have escorted the *SS Leinster* out of harbour, but she ran aground in squalls and patchy fog. They soon joined the Substance convoy which had come out from the UK, but about midday the three Tribals took up position with Force H about thirty miles away to the north-east.

The next day all destroyers fuelled from *Brown Ranger* who then returned to Gibraltar. All that day there were reports of vessels and aircraft trying to locate the convoy in the bad weather that prevailed. But by evening the weather started to improve and that night a U-boat was driven off.

At 0530 on the 23rd, Force H joined the convoy's close escort and ten minutes later they were sighted by a reconnaissance aircraft. The weather was very good when high-level and torpedo-bomber attacks began at 0910. *Fearless* was lost while *Manchester* was damaged and had to return to Gibraltar. Another high-level air attack an hour later planted a nearmiss between *Sikh* and *Foxhound*, but that was all. Torpedo-bombers in the afternoon failed to score any hits.

At 1615 Force H turned back, although *Cossack*, *Maori* and *Sikh* stayed with the convoy. Two more high-level bombing attacks at 1900 and 1945 nearmissed *Firedrake* so close that she was damaged and had to turn back.

Aircraft shadowed the convoy during the night and at 0245 *Cossack*'s radar picked up suspicious craft approaching. Searchlights were switched on to illuminate E-boats which were promptly engaged by *Cossack*, *Edinburgh* and *Manxman*. One E-boat was hit and made off, firing a torpedo which passed close under *Cossack*'s stern.

Actions against E-boats continued for most of the night, and the freighter *Sydney Star* was damaged. There was no flashless propellant for the destroyers' starshell, and when searchlights were used, they illuminated the convoy as much as the E-boats. But there were other methods of location. At 0315 *Cossack* ran down a hydrophone bearing, hoping to ram its source. She missed an E-boat, but hit it with gunfire. This time the E-boat's torpedo just missed *Cossack*'s bow.

During the 24th, various escorting warships headed for Malta, but *Cossack*, *Maori* and *Sikh* were among those who stayed with the convoy until they entered Grand Harbour at 1530. Three hours later the Tribals had disembarked their passengers, had fuelled and were ready to leave. They thus missed that night's daring attack on Grand Harbour by Italian explosive motor-boats.

Next morning they rejoined Force H off the Galita Islands. At 1037 there was

another high-level bombing attack. While driving it off a Fulmar was damaged and hit the sea near *Sikh*. There were no survivors.

On the 26th, *Cossack* and *Foresight* depth-charged a U-boat that had just fired its torpedoes. There was no result, so they caught up Force H again and on the morrow, arrived at Gibraltar.

On the 30/31st, *Cossack* and *Maori* helped to escort *Ark Royal*, *Nelson* and *Renown* out of Gibraltar. The next night the force was off Sardinia. *Cossack* and *Maori* entered Alghero Roads, switched on their searchlights, fired starshell and then carried out a bombardment of the waterfront which destroyed the Custom House and hit a seaplane base. Their success was followed up by a midnight air strike. After cruising off the Balearic Islands, Force H met the ships that had delivered troops to Malta and all forces returned to Gibraltar on 4th August.

A fortnight later *Cossack* and *Zulu* were at Greenock, preparing to escort another convoy to Malta. This was Operation Halberd. It was preceded by a number of diversionary shipping movements off Gibraltar, designed to mislead Axis spies on the Spanish Coast. By 0800 on 25th September, the convoy had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar and Force H, which included *Cossack* and *Zulu*, had taken up position some distance away.

The next day they were shadowed by aircraft and also sighted by French merchantmen. It was therefore assumed that their position was known to the enemy and on the 27th Force H closed the convoy. There were three torpedo-bomber attacks between 1255 and 1405. One torpedo hit *Nelson* and another came for *Cossack*, but its approach was picked up on the hydrophone and it was evaded.

The main escort turned back at 1855, although *Cossack* and *Zulu* stayed with the convoy. An hour later aircraft were reported approaching and *Cossack* alerted the convoy by firing a white-and-red very light. This resulted in some confusion as ships turned in different directions away from a menace they could not see and the attack did not come for another fifteen minutes. One aircraft dived so closely on *Zulu* that her guns could not bear and the destroyer was damaged by bomb splinters. There were two more air raids before 2030 and the merchant ship *Imperial Star* was lost.

The rest of the convoy arrived in Grand Harbour on the afternoon of the 28th to a great welcome. Malta could now hold out until May 1942. *Cossack* and *Zulu* left later the same day and returned to Gibraltar.

Cossack was again employed on convoy escort and in October left Gibraltar with a slow convoy for the UK. On the night of the 23rd, she was at the stern of the convoy when a torpedo from U-563 hit just forward of the bridge, killing Captain Berthon and 158 of his officers and men. A further 29 were injured. Ammunition exploded and she caught fire. No. 1 boiler room was flooding and the survivors abandoned ship in carley floats.

They were picked up by the other escorts, but *Cossack* did not sink and her fire went out. A damage control party therefore stood by aboard the corvette *Carnation* and at dawn they got a better look at their crippled ship. Part of *Cossack*'s fo'c'sle

had broken away and sunk so that the after part of the hull was a little more buoyant. There was a chance that she might be saved.

The Cossacks therefore reboarded their ship, shored up No. 1 boiler room bulkhead and flashed up the other boilers. They tried in vain to pump out No. 1 boiler room but had more success with the engines. They got them going astern, but *Cossack* could not make much speed and it was a long way to Gibraltar.

For a day and a night and another day they struggled. A tug was on its way from Gibraltar, but the weather worsened and the Cossacks were taken off for the night. *Cossack* went down next day.

So passed the most famous of the Tribals. Her spirit lived on in public memory – recalled more often than any other Tribal. Even in the official mind *Cossack* was more readily identifiable than her sisters. In 1942 Canada issued a postage stamp showing *Iroquois* on her trials. Examination showed that it was *Cossack* with her pennant number plainly visible.

Commanding Officers

Capt D. De Pass, RN 28th December 1937 – 28th December 1939.
Cdr R. St. V. Sherbrooke, RN 29th December 1939 – 17th January 1940.
Capt P. L. Vian, RN 18th January 1940 – 18th March 1940.
Cdr R. St. V. Sherbrooke, RN 19th March 1940 – 4th May 1940.
Capt P. L. Vian, DSO, RN 5th May 1940 – 9th July 1941.
Capt E. L. Berthon, DSC, RN 10th July 1941 – 23rd October 1941.

Pennant Numbers

L03 May 1938 – December 1938
F03 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G03 Autumn 1940 – October 1941

HMS Eskimo

Second of name

Builders: Parsons Marine Steam Turbine Co (Hull sub-contracted to Vickers-Armstrong, High Walker Yard, The Tyne)
Engined by: Parsons Marine Steam Turbine Co, Wallsend
Ordered: June 1936
Laid Down: 5th August 1936
Launched: 3rd September 1937 (by Lady Best)
Commissioned: 30th December 1938

ESKIMO'S JOURNEYINGS ranged from the realms of her namesakes to tropical waters where no kayak ever floated – from the Arctic Circle to the Indian Ocean.

They began by taking part in the combined Home and Mediterranean Fleet exercises off Gibraltar early in 1939. After Easter leave at her home port of Chatham, *Eskimo* accompanied *Somali*, *Ashanti* and *Matabele* on a goodwill visit to Cherbourg from 3rd to 8th May.

Back at Portland, the 6th DF carried out a number of gunnery and other exercises. On 17th May the 2pdr guns were being cleaned when blank charges suddenly went off in the breech. No one on the gun was injured, but nearby two men were lowering the motor-boat and two more were working on a hawser. One seaman was killed and the other three injured. The flotilla later organised a dance in Weymouth to raise funds for the dead man's relatives and 700 people attended.

Eskimo was present at the *Thetis* disaster and took part in the 6th DF's other activities prior to the outbreak of war.

Like most other Tribals, *Eskimo* soon had trouble with her turbines and was sent away from Scapa Flow for the necessary repairs in September 1939. On passage she encountered *Faulknor*, *Foxhound* and *Firedrake*. In the dark, the meeting came close to an engagement, but the situation was soon resolved and both parties proceeded on their way.

Eskimo was back at Scapa Flow with *Somali* and *Ashanti* by 17th October 1939, when the first air raid there took place. She shot down one aircraft and later assisted the damaged battleship *Iron Duke*.

The winter of 1939/40 was one of patrols, convoys and high-speed in rough weather. Soon another refit was due. It included degaussing and repairs to leaking feed-water tanks, and was completed at Southampton on 8th March 1940.

Eskimo was now ready to take part in the impending operations in Norwegian waters, which were accelerated by the German invasion of Scandinavia. On 8th April, *Bedouin*, *Eskimo* and *Punjabi* were among the ships detached from the Home Fleet to help *Glowworm*. They were diverted to Vestfiord and then went on to fight

the 2nd Battle of Narvik. *Eskimo* was torpedoed and had her bows blown off in this action, and it was not until the next day that she reached Skelfiord.

Most of *Eskimo*'s crew left the ship but the remainder were helped by the repair ship *Vindictive*. The whole of the bow was cut away by two Norwegians and the bulkheads thoroughly shored up. 'B' mounting was also taken out, using the derricks on the captured German merchant ship *Alster*.

A temporary boom had been placed across the entrance to Cripples Creek, affording some sort of anti-submarine protection. But a German reconnaissance plane flew over, circled and was fired at. The next day bombing began and continued for three weeks. Once the heaviest work had been done, *Eskimo* was left on her own. She suffered many splinter holes, but no direct hit. On 7th May she was ready to steam round to Harstad, where there was more bombing and she was further damaged by splinters.

At last on 31st May, *Eskimo* was ready for the open sea. She moved away from the quay, was taken in tow stern first and joined a slow convoy bound for the Clyde. An air raid saw them on their way, but the day was misty and overcast and no damage was done.

On 4th June, *Eskimo* arrived at Vickers-Armstrong's Yard at Barrow-in-Furness and the work of rebuilding began. A new fo'c'sle was constructed from B-gundeck forward and three months later her original 'B' mounting was replaced. 'X' mounting was also removed and a twin 4in installed. Reconstruction was completed in September, and by the end of the month *Eskimo* had rejoined the 6th DF.

The flotilla was still mainly engaged in escorting the big ships of the Home Fleet on their patrols – work which was undertaken for most of the winter of 1940/41. There was a break in this routine from 28th February to 5th March 1941 when *Somali*, *Bedouin*, *Eskimo*, *Tartar* and *Legion* took part in a commando raid on the Lofoten Islands. After a short refit, the next operation of note began on 22nd May, when *Somali*, *Mashona*, *Tartar* and *Eskimo* left the Clyde to escort the battleship *Rodney* and the liner *Britannic* across the Atlantic.

Two days later *Rodney*, *Somali*, *Mashona* and *Tartar* were diverted to intercept the German battleship *Bismarck*, while *Eskimo* continued with *Britannic* on her way to Boston.

By 3rd June, *Eskimo* was back at Scapa Flow, but it was now her turn for a major refit, to be carried out by Green and Silley Weir in London. By the time it was completed in September, *Eskimo*'s after funnel had been cut down, her mainmast removed and various radars installed.

On returning to the 6th DF, *Eskimo* shared with *Ashanti* in the Home Fleet operations of the coming winter. She escorted the new governor to the Faeroes, accompanied a carrier strike on Bodo and went to the Lofotens for Christmas. In March 1942 *Eskimo* took part in the movements which covered PQ12 and QP8 and also in the abortive sweep to intercept *Tirpitz*. Springtime weather in the Atlantic could be just as violent as in the winter months. On 9th May, *Eskimo* lost a man overboard. His would-be rescuer could not recover him and both were lost. Even going down-

Channel could be rough. Admittedly the ship was riding light, having been destored at Plymouth ready for her refit at Falmouth. She rolled over so far that some on board thought she must surely keep going, but she recovered.

Newer radar was installed, while a HF/DF aerial on a short mast was fitted aft. Single 20mm oerlikons were mounted right aft and between the 0.5in machine-guns. Accommodation had to be found for extra personnel, including a "headache" operator, who listened continually to enemy R/T wavelengths.

This Falmouth refit and the relevant trials were completed in time for *Eskimo* to join *Ashanti* on the Pedestal convoy to Malta. It was immediately followed by PQ18 and QP14.

Under Captain Eaton, *Eskimo* became leader of the Force H destroyer screen for the landings in North Africa in November 1942. *Ashanti* and *Tartar* were the other two Tribals in the Force. Once the actual assault was over, the destroyers were employed on various coastal activities.

On one occasion, on 1st December, *Eskimo* and *Pathfinder* were on anti-submarine patrol in Mers-El-Kebir Bay, when they got an asdic contact on a large shoal of fish. Although harmless in themselves, it was decided to drive them away with depth-charges lest a U-boat enter the bay under cover of these confusing echoes. Many fish were killed and Captain Eaton requested the retrieval of a large fish he could see close to *Pathfinder*'s starboard quarter. The rating trying to get it fell in. Two men dived in to save him and two more to save the prize fish. This gaiety was suddenly ended by two US aircraft who arrived over what they assumed to be a U-boat hunt and came roaring down to attack. Fortunately nobody felt trigger-happy.

Leaving the area, *Eskimo* and *Pathfinder* went off to locate the minelayer *Manxman*, torpedoed 70 miles to the east. *Pathfinder* took her in tow and they made for Oran at 6 knots with *Eskimo* escorting.

In January 1943, *Eskimo* had problems of her own. She was alongside *Nelson* preparing for sea when fire broke out in a boiler room. Damage was chiefly confined to the main electric cable runs and they had to be replaced – a task which took almost a week.

By 7th May, the Axis armies in North Africa were finished. Expecting a massive evacuation, Admiral Cunningham ordered his destroyers to concentrate in the Sicilian Narrows, while coastal craft patrolled close inshore. On 8th May he signalled "Sink, burn and destroy. Let nothing pass." This was Operation Retribution.

After such a stirring signal, the actual events of the next few days were something of an anti-climax. At dusk on the 8th, *Jervis*, *Nubian* and *Paladin* bombarded Kelibia, hitting the town and various vessels in the harbour. Two small guns replied without result.

That night *Laforey*, *Tartar* and *Loyal* were on patrol north of Cape Bon when they sighted the 834-ton supply ships KT5 and KT21 armed with one 75mm, one 37mm and two 20mm guns. It seemed as though they were trying to float supply containers ashore, but in fact one was carrying tanks and both were loaded with petrol and ammunition. At 0214 the British destroyers illuminated the enemy with

starshell and searchlights and opened fire. Twenty-one minutes later both targets were ablaze and exploding and the destroyers were picking up survivors. At dawn they sighted several small sailing boats towing rafts and rubber dinghies. *Loyal* and *Tartar* thus picked up 52 Germans trying to escape from North Africa.

Meanwhile *Jervis*, *Nubian* and *Paladin* had repeated their bombardment of Kelibia at dawn. In the afternoon they acquired a small sailing boat with 17 German and Italian soldiers in it. The craft was also towing a rubber dinghy which contained an RAF sergeant pilot. *Nubian* continued her fishing over the next two days by gathering up more German soldiers trying to get across to Pantelleria on rafts made out of jerricans lashed together.

From the 11th to 13th, *Eskimo* and *Lookout* accompanied a group of Hunts catching scores of Germans, including the Chief of Staff of a Panzer Division. These men were all in small boats. The only German landing craft they saw was in the middle of a known minefield and eventually surrendered. German shore batteries were not very effective – only *Laforey* was hit. There were no German aircraft about, but *Bicester* was hit by a Spitfire's bomb, in spite of the fact that British upperworks were painted bright red, with a Union Flag on the top of a turret, for easy identification.

Captain Eaton wrote "I regret that this patrol did not yield more substantial results, but I feel it was of high nuisance value and strongly discouraged enemy yachtsmen."

For a while there was a lull in the Mediterranean War. The islands of Pantelleria, Lampedusa and Linosa were occupied, while something special was arranged to celebrate Malta's deliverance. On 19th June, *Eskimo*, *Nubian*, *Jervis* and *Lookout* left Tripoli escorting *Aurora*. They were preceded by minesweepers and covered overhead by fighters. They arrived in Grand Harbour on 20th June at 0800 and for the next fourteen hours King George VI toured the George Cross Island. He was escorted back to Tripoli that night, then the little force returned to Malta for the next step towards victory.

On 7th July, *Eskimo*, *Nubian* and *Tartar* left Marsaxlokk to take part in something called Operation Husky. Next morning they met Force H and patrolled with them until the 9th, when the destroyers were assigned to troop convoys. At 2220 many large aircraft passed overhead. The night was very rough, but towards midnight the gale began to die down.

Although the sea was still choppy, the destroyers moved inshore to fulfil their primary function. Fixing their position by means of sonic buoys laid by submarines, they had to guide landing craft into their correct beaches. Nothing must halt them in this task, not even SOS flashes, shouts and whistles from ditched glider-troops struggling in the dark water.

Nubian showed the way to George Beach, north of Avola, *Tartar* was off Jig Amber Beach and *Eskimo* took her LCAs into Jig Green. Occasional shells were fired from the shore, but in the darkness the destroyers could not distinguish any definite targets. However, at 0410, *Tartar*'s guns put out two searchlights near Avola. Then as dawn broke the destroyers were able to leave their assault craft safely ashore and devote their energies to providing gunfire support.

There was a troublesome battery hidden in some trees near Avola. From time to time it opened fire upon How Beach. At 0545 *Eskimo* sent five salvoes in its direction and it ceased fire, but started again at 0610. Again *Eskimo* silenced it, only for it to open up again an hour later. This time *Eskimo*'s six salvoes were followed by an explosion and spreading flames. There was no further trouble from that battery.

Nubian also shelled a battery, but the results of that indirect bombardment were not known. There were air raids on the beaches and ships for most of the day and although not heavy the Luftwaffe did score a number of successes.

That night the hospital ship *Talamba* was bombed, although she was brilliantly illuminated. Many on board were killed and she started to go down. Commander Tyrwhitt took *Tartar* in bow to bow and many patients, medical staff and crew were thus saved. They were temporarily accommodated in the messdecks and later transferred to other ships. *Eskimo*, *Carlisle* and *Uganda* also helped in this rescue operation.

Nubian and *Tartar* began the 11th by escorting minesweepers to sweep the approach channel into Syracuse, captured on the first day. *Eskimo* then took in the port party and the destroyers returned to the beaches.

At 1235 the *SS Baarn* was hit. *Carlisle* tried to take her in tow, but the burning ship was carrying petrol and ammunition and was liable to blow up at any time, so *Tartar* had to sink her. After refuelling during an afternoon attack, *Nubian* joined *Eskimo* in screening *Uganda* while the cruiser shelled Augusta in the evening.

Reports that the Germans had evacuated Augusta began to come in during the early hours of the 12th. *Eskimo* was ordered to investigate these rumours and at 0500 she set off carrying Rear-Admiral Troubridge, who hoped to establish his headquarters there. Three miles south of Murro di Porco several German aircraft appeared. It was still not quite light, but apparently the dive-bombers aimed at a point ahead of *Eskimo*'s wake.

A small bomb hit the port side, abreast of 'X' mounting and penetrated No. 5 and 6 oil fuel tanks. The explosion wrecked the gearing room, started a fire and killed or injured 19 men. The fire was put out in 40 minutes and other ships gathered round. Rear-Admiral Troubridge was transferred first to *Mauritius* and then to *Exmoor*, to be taken into Augusta. *Aldenham* embarked the wounded for transfer to a hospital ship while *Tartar* took *Eskimo* in tow. Escorted by *Miaoulis* they reached Malta at 1700 and temporary repairs were begun.

Their completion was delayed by a fire in the ordnance flat in which a Maltese workman died. Even after she had been patched up, one of *Eskimo*'s shafts remained buckled and it was agreed that she should return to the UK on one screw only. Lieutenant Manners would take the ship back while Captain Eaton and his staff went ashore to administer the Eastern Mediterranean destroyers.

Although out of the Sicilian Campaign, the Eskimos still heard of the latest happenings from *Nubian* and *Tartar* who returned regularly to Malta to replenish.

After *Eskimo* had been hit *Nubian* continued screening bigger ships while they bombarded enemy positions near Augusta. About 1315 Commander Holland-Martin witnessed a commotion some distance away and closed to help. It proved to

be the minesweepers *Boston*, *Cromarty*, *Poole* and *Seaham* attacking the Italian submarine *Bronzo*. The sweepers seemed quite capable of dealing with the U-boat and *Nubian* left them to it. *Bronzo* soon surrendered. She was later taken into the RN and eventually transferred to the French Navy.

At 1900 *Nubian*, *Tetcott* and *Kanaris* escorted the LSI *Ulster Monarch* into Augusta Harbour to land commandos. One enemy gun opened fire but it was on the far side of a hill and so could not depress sufficiently. Thus the ships were safe providing they kept close inshore. On the other hand, *Nubian*'s air bursts could reach this solitary gun and it presently fell silent. Enemy machine-guns nearer the shore then opened up, but stopped when the concentrated fire from all the ships in the bay fell upon them. The enemy soldiers abandoned their weapons and scrambled up the hillside, each man being speeded on his way by a full broadside from *Kanaris*. *Ulster Monarch*, *Tetcott* and *Kanaris* left an hour after they had entered the bay, while *Nubian* temporarily acted as rearguard, her air bursts dissuading the enemy artillerymen from returning to their gun over the hill.

Nubian's bombardments of Catania on 14th, 15th and 16th were interspersed with air raids and the rescue of Allied airmen; one RAF sergeant on one day and the crew of ten from a B-17 that crashed near by on another. On the 17th *Tartar* had joined Force H off Catania to help screen *Formidable* and on 20th there was an air raid on Malta, the first for several months. A nearmiss on *Nubian* killed four of her crew and injured twelve others. The dead and wounded were landed at Malta, although those with minor injuries soon rejoined.

As the British army pressed up the coast of Sicily, so the bombarding ships kept pace with them. *Nubian* and *Tartar* helped to shell batteries at Riposto, Giarre and Aireale on 8th August. The enemy retaliated with an air raid on Augusta on the 10th, but *Nubian* only suffered minor damage from splinters. On the 12th, *Mauritius*, *Nubian* and *Tartar* shelled gun positions and crossroads near Riposto. That evening they were joined by *Uganda* and carried out a sweep along the Italian coast beyond Crotone. *Tartar* and *Nubian* did a similar sweep off Cape Spartivento on 14/15th August, hoping to catch any enemy forces evacuating from Sicily, but such withdrawals were carried out across the Straits of Messina. The two Tribals came under ineffective fire from batteries near Cape Bruzzano and Locri, and later engaged three E-boats at long range. The enemy fired torpedoes which missed. Two days later the Sicilian Campaign ended.

Eskimo had arrived at Gibraltar by 27th August and was well on her way home. She arrived at Immingham in September and began a major refit. Besides repairing all her battle damage, a lattice foremast replaced the tripod and 20mm oerlikons were mounted instead of the 0.5in machine-guns.

Some of *Eskimo*'s sea-trials were conducted off the Humber, but on 16th April 1944, she left Immingham to work up her new crew and equipment at Scapa Flow. Her exercises were uneventful, apart from one submarine scare, and in May she joined the 10th DF at Plymouth.

Eskimo took part in the exercises preceding D-Day, the Tunnel anti-shipping

sweeps and the Hostile operations covering minelayers. She shared the Hurd Deep patrol with *Ashanti* and the rest of the 10th DF from 2/3rd June 1944 onwards, but was in the 2nd Division on the night of 8/9th June. Being farther out to sea, she only played a minor part in the destruction of ZH1 and Z32.

German surface warships had proved incapable of breaking through the Allied patrols in the Channel. It was now the turn of the U-boats to try to cut the flow of supplies from the UK to Normandy.

Eskimo and *Haida* had begun a patrol in the Channel Islands – St Malo area on 23rd June. That night they were illuminated by flares from a suspicious Coastal Command aircraft, otherwise nothing happened. The next day they moved down-Channel to support frigate and corvette anti-submarine groups off Ushant. In the afternoon a Czech Liberator sighted U-971 (a 769-ton U-boat). He depth-charged it, dropped smoke floats to mark its position and called up *Eskimo* and *Haida*.

From 1600 to 1900 the two Tribals depth-charged U-971, each ship assisting the other into an attacking position. There was no visible result, her captain possibly hoping to remain motionless and thus be mistaken for one of the numerous wrecks in the area.

The ninth attack by *Eskimo* did it. Flooded to a depth of six inches, U-971 broke surface and everything happened at once. *Eskimo* opened fire with all her guns, *Haida* was firing her 'B' mounting and oerlikons, U-971's conning-tower was destroyed and she caught fire. *Eskimo* had sent away a boarding party to seize con-fidential codebooks and it was somewhat to their relief when U-971 suddenly slipped under and was gone. The boat was joined by others and they began picking up survivors. Only one man was lost out of U-971's crew of 54, but 27 had been wounded. The Germans were landed at Falmouth and the Tribals returned to Plymouth.

On the next patrol on the 27/28th, *Eskimo* was accompanied by *Huron*. Cherbourg had just fallen and the two ships had to prevent the enemy escaping along the Brittany coast. They passed the Channel Islands, closed St Malo and headed towards Jersey again.

At 0100 starshell was fired to illuminate radar contacts that turned out to be a minesweeper and two trawlers about 6,000 yards away. The enemy promptly made smoke and tried to run under the cover of shore batteries. *Huron*'s gunfire hit the minesweeper, set her on fire and her ammunition began exploding. *Huron* then con-centrated on one of the trawlers until she blew up, while *Eskimo* chased the other one into the smoke. As she emerged beyond, another trawler loomed up close on the port side. Apparently only armed with one 3in, one 37mm and four 20mm guns, the little trawler used them well.

One 3in shell hit *Eskimo* in No. 1 boiler room. One solid-nosed 37mm shell punctured the main steamline in No. 3 boiler room and there was another hit else-where. *Eskimo* lost all steam and electric power. The switchboard, steering motor, lights, gun mountings, radar aerials – all went dead. She continued firing in hand control while *Huron* circled the smoke. Unable to sort out embattled friend and foe,

Huron returned to the blazing minesweeper and sank her. Then as *Eskimo* got under way and crawled out of the smoke at 6 knots, *Huron* finished off one of the trawlers, while the third escaped, not without damage. By 0430 *Eskimo* was returning to Plymouth with *Huron* at 20 knots on one boiler only.

Eskimo had already tried to destroy one abandoned trawler, but she was apparently made of wood and gunfire would not sink her. Three depth-charges were thrown in her direction and she started to go down. Later the Germans admitted the loss of M4620 (previously the 197-ton French trawler *Etienne Rimbert*) and Vp213 (the 282-ton trawler *Claus Bolten*), but claimed they had sunk *Eskimo*.

Eskimo's damage was soon repaired, but it had perhaps more serious consequences. Certainly on the night of the 1/2nd July, her radar was unserviceable and she was also suffering from a steering defect, having to be steered from the tiller flat right aft. Because of its distance from the bridge, this position was slower in reacting to helm orders and so *Eskimo* had fallen several miles astern of *Tartar*, *Huron* and *Javelin* during a high-speed patrol off Ushant.

When the division separated into pairs, *Javelin* was ordered to join *Eskimo* and proceed to Plymouth. While so doing, she crossed over *Eskimo*'s course in low visibility and collided with her. *Eskimo*'s bows were seriously damaged and there were five casualties in *Javelin*, who was badly damaged aft. Neither ship could steam, so *Huron* took *Eskimo* in tow while *Tartar* stood by *Javelin*. Presently tugs arrived to take both *Eskimo* and *Javelin* to Plymouth, arriving there twenty-four hours later.

Soon after she reached Devonport, the gaping hole in *Eskimo*'s bows almost engulfed a boat being swept downstream after its engine had stalled. Some deft work with a boat hook and a ring bolt saved the Wren crew from a Jonah-like fate.

After temporary repairs, *Eskimo* went round to Birkenhead where for the second time in her life, a new bow was fitted. The work was completed on 31st October and she returned to Plymouth Command for a while, escorting 'monsters' in and out of the Western Approaches. These giant troopships (*Aquitania*, *Ile De France*, *Nieuw Amsterdam*, *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary*) were usually fast enough to travel alone and unescorted once clear of coastal waters. "10° West" was a common reference in the destroyers' escorting instructions.

As there was now very little work for the Tribals in Home Waters it was decided to send them out to the Far East to join the Australian Tribals in the final defeat of Japan. *Ashanti* was to sail as soon as she had finished her major machinery overhaul and the Canadians would follow after they had been refitted at Halifax. As it was, only *Tartar*, *Nubian* and *Eskimo* went out at various intervals, and they only got as far as the Indian Ocean.

Eskimo went out via the Mediterranean and joined the fleet at Trincomalee. Immediately the present unsuitability of these Tribals for the Tropics became evident. Having been arcticised for Russian convoys, they were even hotter than the other ships in the fleet. The temperature in the galley could reach 160° when the ship was darkened, and no ship received water coolers. In harbour most men slept on deck but they were terribly overcrowded now with 275 men on board, and there were

awful smells from the provision stores. The initial standard of food did not help; a load of bread embarked at one port was found to be full of weevils. The only pleasant advantage was the excellent bathing to be had on the Burmese beaches after the Japanese had left.

For most of the spring of 1945, *Eskimo* was employed in operations south of Ramree Island where odd parties of Japanese were still holding out. The period had begun with Operation Block, in which coastal craft, backed up by destroyers, tried to prevent the Japanese escape. When boats were intercepted, their occupants tried to swim away and it has been recorded that over 900 Japanese were killed by crocodiles in the swamps.

The three Tribals were mainly engaged in providing gunfire support around Kyaukpu or Letpan or Taunggup. For the most part it was a series of hazardous journeys up tiny nameless chuangs and uncharted mangrove swamps, with only a few feet of water under the keel. At the head of the creek, the destroyer would carry out her bombardment of some unseen target, directed by a forward observation officer, who was, more often than not, up a tree. The Nubians cooperated closely with a spotter plane, dining its crew aboard on a Saturday, and being taken up for a flight on the Sunday.

Sometimes a party of Indian troops, led by a couple of British NCOs, would be put ashore. These passengers were usually Sikhs or Punjabis and a covered wagon affair had to be rigged over the stern for their creature comforts. It was just as well that no depth-charges ever had to be dropped.

On 27th April, the East Indies fleet sailed from Trincomalee to begin a series of strikes prior to the capture of Rangoon. *Tartar*, *Nubian* and *Eskimo* accompanied a double force of battleships, cruisers and destroyers that took it in turns to fuel and then screen the carriers hitting airfields, installations and coastal shipping in the Nicobars, the Andamans and along the Burma coast. Returning to Trincomalee, the ships Spliced The Main Brace to celebrate VE-Day.

At 0600 on 10th May, the day after they arrived back at Trincomalee, the Tribals sailed again with Force 61 to intercept the cruiser *Haguro*, the destroyer *Kamikaze*, the landing ship *Kuroshio Maru* and the subchaser No. 57, trying to relieve the Japanese garrisons on the Andamans.

Force 61 steamed eastwards, ready to repel the expected suicide attacks that did not develop. *Haguro* was apparently alarmed by the presence of the Allied ships, who stayed at sea hoping to trap the cruiser if she did try for the Andamans. On 14th May, a Liberator sighted *Kuroshio Maru* and No. 57 after they had left Nancowry with 450 troops from the Nicobars on board. That night the 26th DF sank *Haguro* while the Tribals stayed with Force 61. A number of Nakajima Ki.43 Oscars made sporadic attacks while the fleet was returning to Trincomalee.

There remained the other ships of the Japanese force trying to slip away to Singapore without being sunk by Allied aircraft. On 5th June, *Tartar*, *Nubian* (who had just returned from a convoy to Addu Atoll), *Eskimo*, *Penn* and *Paladin* were sent to search for them. The Tribals were patrolling between the Nicobars and Sabang when

Kuroshio Maru and No. 57 left Penang. At 0526 on the 12th they were intercepted. *Nubian*'s guns dealt with the 420-ton No. 57, while *Eskimo* put two torpedoes into *Kuroshio Maru* and the action was over.

Continuing their patrol in the Straits of Malacca, they fought off an air attack, one bomb falling close to *Nubian*. Returning, the Tribals passed through the survivors of their earlier action. There were about 30 or 40 Japanese in the water, all wearing red-and-white skullcaps and looking like a large water-polo team. As usual in such cases, the Japanese refused assistance. Perhaps they were relying on their headgear to attract their own rescue forces. Perhaps they suicidally wanted death by drowning rather than the disgrace of captivity. It was impossible to pick them up without using force, and they had to be left.

Eskimo was included in the force which covered minesweeping operations in the Nicobars from 5th to 11th July 1945. She then screened *Nigeria*'s bombardments of Nancowry and other Nicobar targets, as well as escorting *Ameer* and *Emperor* during their air strikes.

During one of these raids an aircraft crashed near the coast and *Eskimo* was ordered to "Proceed with caution through minefield" and rescue the pilot from the beach. Great caution was indeed observed, but as *Eskimo* was negotiating the danger area, a Sea Otter picked up the pilot and flew him back to his carrier – much to the Eskimos' relief.

Nubian, too, was closely concerned with carriers about this time, acting as plane guard for *Begum* during deck landing practice. One aircraft struck the flight-deck, killing a rating there, and plunging over the side. *Nubian*'s whaler recovered the pilot and then took the body of the unfortunate rating into Trincomalee.

Soon the Japanese War was coming to an end. *Nubian* had a refit at Bombay and on 28th August 1945 she and *Tartar* went to Penang with the force which accepted the preliminary surrender of the place. Once this had been done, minesweeping could begin as a prelude to the official surrender ceremony aboard *Nelson* on 2nd September 1945. Later *Tartar* went on to Singapore itself to rescue a number of emaciated prisoners of war and take them back to Ceylon. Presently *Tartar* and *Nubian* returned to the UK via the Mediterranean, arriving back in November 1945.

Eskimo had played no part in these final operations. It had been decided that various units of the East Indies Fleet should have extensive refits at Durban to keep the work-force there fully employed. The Eskimos did not think their ship needed it yet. They had already drydocked at Bombay since their arrival in the Indian Ocean. (A small fire had broken out in *Eskimo* during this stay and it had been doused with great speed and much water by the Bombay Fire Brigade, who no doubt feared a repetition of the *Fort Stikine* explosion.)

Eskimo's wishes were overruled and so she and *Roebuck* were sent to Durban. They were actually at Diego Suarez on VJ-Day.

The refit was memorable for the warmth of the South Africans' welcome. There was no war, no blackout and all the food, drink, games, tours and gaiety that the Eskimos could ask for. In November the refit was over and *Eskimo* sailed for

home via Port Elizabeth, Capetown, Accra, Takoradi, Freetown and Gibraltar.

Eskimo arrived at Chatham on the Friday before Christmas 1945. Instead of the customary alongside berth after a foreign commission, she was told to wait at a buoy in midstream to save the payment of weekend overtime in the dockyard – a highly unpopular decision. However, the people of Capetown had sent twenty tons of Christmas puddings and other presents to brighten the dreariness of austerity Britain. The Press heard of this and their photographers wanted pictures of the puddings being unloaded. So permission was granted for overtime to be worked, *Eskimo* was brought into dock and her travels were over.

Early in 1946, her torpedo tubes were removed and a sort of prefabricated house placed on her deck. Her screws were removed to prevent her touching bottom and she was towed to Queenborough. *Eskimo* ended her days as a depot, accommodation and headquarters ship for the minesweepers, wreck-disposal vessels, salvage craft and survey ships clearing the Thames and Medway estuaries. She was then laid up, first at Sheerness, then at Harwich, and finally used as a target in the Gareloch. On 27th June 1949 she was sold for scrapping at Troon.

Commanding Officers

Cdr St. J. A. Micklethwait, RN 9th December 1938 – 14th November 1940.
Cdr E. G. Le Geyt, RN 15th November 1940 – September 1942.
Lt D. L. Binnington, RN October 1942.
Capt J. W. M. Eaton, DSO, DSC, RN November 1942 – August 1943.
Lt J. E. Manners, RN August 1943 – 31st January 1944.
Lt-Cdr E. N. Sinclair, RN 1st February 1944 – December 1945.
Cdr C. P. F. Brown, DSC, RN December 1945 – 11th June 1946.
Cdr P. G. A. King, DSC, RD, RNR 12th June 1946 – 2nd September 1946.
Cdr A. Longmuir, DSC, RNR 3rd September 1946 – 4th November 1947.
Lt-Cdr A. H. Martin, RN 5th November 1947 – 14th April 1948.

Pennant Numbers

L75 May 1938 – December 1938
F75 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G75 Autumn 1940 – June 1949

HMS Gurkha

Third of name – originally called Ghurka

Builders: Fairfield Shipbuilding Co, Govan
Engined by: Fairfield Shipbuilding Co, Govan
Ordered: 10th March 1936
Laid Down: 6th July 1936
Launched: 7th June 1937
Commissioned: 21st October 1938

GURKHA'S DEPARTURE for the Mediterranean in December 1938 was delayed while gunsights and other items were fitted, repairs carried out and final trials completed. During this period trophies were presented to the ship by the Gurkha Brigade and from then on the soldiers took a very close interest in what they regarded as their very own destroyer.

Eventually arriving at Malta on 20th December, *Gurkha* was assigned to the 1st Sub-Division of the 1st Tribal DF. For most of the time therefore, *Gurkha* worked closely with *Afridi*, although there were occasions when she was on her own or with other ships.

For example, after the combined Home and Mediterranean exercises had ended early in 1939, *Gurkha* was despatched to Almeria and Cartagena to see that all was well with the British consuls there. Commander Parham witnessed the triumphal entry of General Franco's troops into Cartagena and then *Gurkha* returned to Gibraltar. En route the Tribal was closely inspected by the Spanish Nationalist cruiser *Canarias*. Having approached with all guns trained on *Gurkha*, *Canarias* was apparently satisfied that she was not dealing with a Spanish Republican destroyer trying to get to Africa, and made off.

Gurkha and *Sikh* took advantage of their passage together from Gibraltar to Palma and Malta, to carry out a towing exercise. Unfortunately they collided, but it was a glancing blow and both only suffered minor damage with no casualties. Both had to be docked when they reached Malta.

From then on, until they returned to the UK, *Afridi* and *Gurkha* were in company. The Albanian Crisis, the visit to Athens, their Red Sea foray, and French troop convoys; in all these *Afridi* and *Gurkha* were together. Both shared in blockade patrols later in September, although they were assigned separate areas for contraband control. *Gurkha* had a very profitable beat near the Greek Islands and at one time had six armed guards out of the ship, ensuring that the merchantmen they were in went to a British port for further inspection. Soon afterwards, *Afridi* and *Gurkha* returned to the UK, depth-charging a suspected U-boat en route.

Gurkha was for a while employed on a North Sea convoy escort (firing her guns

in anger at German aircraft) and in the Humber Striking Force. She then served with the Home Fleet and was almost continually at sea, escorting capital ships on their sweeps in the Atlantic. After one of these she helped to escort *Rodney* to the Clyde and thence to Liverpool for repairs to her steering gear. However, *Gurkha* had troubles of her own – turbine trouble. She therefore went on from Liverpool to Southampton for repairs and degaussing to be carried out.

1940 began well for *Gurkha*. On 8th February she and *Nubian* hunted a U-boat off Scapa Flow. Four days later the same partnership had another U-boat hunt while escorting a Norwegian convoy. On the 21st, Commander Buzzard's persistence was rewarded off the Orkneys when *Gurkha* and the French destroyer *Le Fantasque* shared in the depth-charging and destruction of the 753-ton U-53.

The next event was not so fortunate. On a snowy 9th March, *Gurkha* and *Nubian* were escorting a southbound convoy off the Shetlands when they met a northbound Norwegian convoy. *Gurkha*'s propeller guard gashed a hole in *Kelly*'s bow. Immediately, as per instructions, *Kelly*'s signalman made "Have been hit by mine or torpedo. Am uncertain which." *Gurkha*'s signal came in clearly "That was me, not mine."

Gurkha took part in the very first moves of the Norwegian Campaign, sailing with *Afridi* and a force of cruisers and destroyers from Rosyth on 7/8th April. Meeting up with the Home Fleet on the 9th, they were later detached to attack Bergen, but were then recalled.

At 1400 the force was attacked by Ju88s and He111s. The violent weather prevented adequate AA defence and *Gurkha* came round onto a course which promised better results. This resulted in her leaving the rest of the screen. The aircraft immediately concentrated on her.

One bomb hit aft, blowing a forty-foot hole in the starboard side. The stern caught fire and the after magazine had to be flooded. Soon the stern was awash and *Gurkha* had a 45° list to starboard. All the lights were out but the wounded were brought up and laid on the fo'c'sle. Many were blinded by fuel oil and all had to cling to the guard-rails and anchor chains to stop falling overboard. Some were got into boats and carley floats. One man with a broken leg was tied onto a table and pushed overboard to be picked up later.

It was now getting dark and very cold. Usable guns fired air bursts to attract somebody's, anybody's, attention. Presently *Aurora* arrived on her way to join the C-in-C. She stopped 200 yards away and lowered her boats.

Gurkha heeled over onto her side, so that those men who had not lost their hold on the fo'c'sle, clambered through the guard-rails and sat on the port side. At 1900 she rolled right over and sank.

Red lights fixed to lifebelts showed where freezing survivors were bobbing in the waves or huddled in carley floats. Their hands, slippery with oil and nerveless with cold, could not grip the ropes from *Aurora*'s side. Some fell back and were drowned. Sometimes the ropes broke. Some were swept under by propeller wash. 190 were rescued.

The survivors were taken down to the sick bay, given hot drinks and rum, and rubbed down with turkey red oil to remove the fuel oil. After a warm bath which seemed scalding hot, they were wrapped in blankets and given stimulant injections.

Aurora arrived back at Scapa Flow in the middle of an air raid. The *Gurkha* survivors were landed at Thurso and were accommodated in the Town Hall for two days. They were given money, food and clothing and were then sent to Devonport for survivors' leave.

Gurkha was the first Tribal to be lost. She was also the first British destroyer ever to be sunk by air attack.

When they heard of her loss, every officer and man of the Gurkha Brigade subscribed a day's pay to provide a new ship. *Larne*, an L-class destroyer under construction, was renamed and launched as *Gurkha*. She too was lost, being torpedoed by U-133 off Sollum on 17th January 1942.

The present *Gurkha* is one of the Tribal-class general-purpose frigates, launched between 1959 and 1962. Displacing 2,300 tons, they combine the functions of anti-submarine, AA and aircraft-direction vessels. They have both steam- and gas-turbines on a single shaft, giving a speed of 28 knots. They carry two 4.5in and two 40mm guns, a Limbo anti-submarine mortar, and a helicopter. The other ships in the class are *Ashanti*, *Eskimo*, *Mohawk*, *Nubian*, *Tartar* and *Zulu* (this last being armed with Seacat guided missiles).

Canada is also planning a new class of Tribals; *Algonquin*, *Athabaskan*, *Huron* and *Iroquois*. These helicopter-carrying destroyers will have a displacement of over 5,000 tons. Two-shaft gas turbines will give a speed of 27 knots and they should be armed with one 5in gun, six anti-submarine torpedo-tubes, and one Limbo anti-submarine mortar.

A fund was set up by the old Tribals to present each new ship with a commemorative plaque and a painting (by Francis Russell Flint) of one of her predecessor's wartime exploits.

Commanding Officers

Cdr F. R. Parham, RN 14th September 1938 – 9th January 1940.
Cdr A. W. Buzzard, RN 10th January 1940 – 9th April 1940.

Pennant Numbers

L20 May 1938 – December 1938
F20 January 1939 – April 1940

HMCS Haida

First of name

Builders: Vickers-Armstrong, High Walker Yard, The Tyne
Engined by: Parsons Marine Steam Turbine Co, Wallsend
Ordered: April 1941
Laid Down: 29th September 1941
Launched: 25th August 1942 (by Lady Laurie)
Commissioned: 30th August 1943

'Happy Haida' they called her.

She had her share of problems and defects and casualties, but somehow she always had the reputation of being a happy ship. Perhaps contentment was built into her, along with the extra stiffening which saved her from the hull troubles that so afflicted earlier Tribals. Perhaps her first crew, and her first captain, "Hard-over Harry" they called him, put so much of themselves into her, that she always remained a fortunate ship.

Haida's hull proved its strength in a month of working-up in foul weather at Scapa Flow. Then from 14th to 22nd October 1943, *Haida*, *Iroquois*, *Vigilant*, *Janus*, *Hardy* and *Corry* escorted *Anson*, *Norfolk* and *Ranger* while they covered a double Arctic movement; the relief of the Spitsbergen garrison, and the passage of Russian minesweepers and anti-submarine vessels to Kola.

Three days later *Haida* met *Formidable* off Cape Wrath and escorted her into Scapa Flow. At the beginning of November, she joined the force covering the passage of RA54A from Russia to the UK. All three Canadian Tribals, *Haida*, *Huron* and *Iroquois* then escorted JW54A to Kola and returned with RA54B. The day after they were back, they were out again, this time escorting more reinforcements to Spitsbergen. They were back at Scapa Flow on 11th December and this time had a slightly longer break before the next convoy, JW55B, which left on the 20th. *Ashanti* and *Athabaskan* were returning with RA55A, when the Battle of North Cape was fought by their covering forces to protect these two convoys. *Haida*, *Huron* and *Iroquois* brought RA55B back to the UK on 7th January 1944.

On the 10th, *Haida* arrived at Plymouth to join the 10th DF. She took part in the various pre-invasion exercises and Tunnel operations on 19/20th January and 2/3rd February. From 4th to 12th February, *Haida*, *Athabaskan* and *Iroquois* were detached to Scapa Flow for Operation Posthorn. Returning again to Plymouth, the Canadian Tribals shared in almost all the 10th DF exercises and operations.

Haida helped sink T29 on 25/26th April, but the Elbing inflicted quite a lot of damage on her attackers. *Haida* had 20mm holes in the after superstructure, sick bay, captain's cabin and the cutter, as well as splinter holes in the hull and 'X' gundeck. *Haida*'s own guns had caused general blast and vibration damage, and there were

several casualties. There was also a notch in the bridge rail, carved by Commander DeWolf. By September it would be accompanied by seven more, marking *Haida*'s eight successful actions.

Haida and *Athabaskan* were operating together when the latter was sunk on 28/29th April. *Haida* avenged her sister's loss by destroying T27 the same night.

Haida and *Huron* and the rest of the 10th DF shared more bombardment exercises and patrols and covered more minelaying operations in May. Further successes followed the D-Day landings, *Haida* playing an important part in the destruction of ZH1 and Z32 on 8/9th June. Her sole damage was a splinter hole in the engine room caused by a nearmiss.

On 12th June *Haida* and *Huron* embarked a group of Army personnel and their signalling equipment. They cruised off the Channel Islands, making all sorts of radio signals at the same time as a naval and air bombardment of the mainland took place. The whole idea was to simulate a landing on the west coast of the Cherbourg Peninsula and thus draw off some of the Germans opposing the Americans there.

The next night the 10th DF supported MTBs trying to finish off Z32 ashore off the Ile de Bas. Two nights later *Haida* and *Huron* investigated two suspicious destroyers, but starshell showed them to be RCN vessels.

Then came the sinking of U-971 on 24th June and a signal from *Black Prince*: "Narviks, Elbings and U-boats all seem to come alike to you. Congratulations on your U-boat", and Commander DeWolf's reply "Very many thanks. That was our Saturday afternoon recreation. *Eskimo* did most of the work."

Perhaps more welcome was the fortnight's leave which followed while *Haida* was drydocked for boiler cleaning and minor repairs. Then *Tartar*, *Haida* and *Blyskawica* were out again, looking for trouble off Lorient. 13/14th July was uneventful. The next night was equally calm and clear until 0300 when four ships were illuminated.

Tartar and *Haida* fired at what appeared to be two merchantmen and *Blyskawica* at a trawler towing another craft. Fire was returned from two of the vessels and then the destroyers were circling to come past again, firing as their guns came on. The ship under tow was hit again and again, absorbing heavy punishment without visible result, although smoking fiercely. They might have stayed firing at it all night if someone had not recognised it as a battle practice target, which the German Navy was trying to save for some reason. Forty minutes after opening fire the destroyers pulled away, leaving one of the merchant ships sunk and two more vessels on fire and going down. Later it was learned that the anti-submarine trawlers UJ1420 and UJ1421 had been lost. They were originally the 314-ton *Eylau* and the 253-ton *Deltra II*.

Haida took part in five more Kinetic patrols in July and August. There were two actions during the last patrol on 5/6th August off Belle Ile, in both of which *Haida* suffered damage. In the first *Haida*'s guns were firing continuously as she swept past the enemy ships. Her gunners were loading and firing, loading and firing, loading and . . . a shell went off in the breech of one of 'Y' guns. All the paintwork on the mounting flashed into flame. The trainer was trapped up against the front of the

shield beyond the gun, but a seaman pushed his way through the flaming metal and pulled him out. Both were badly burned. Two more were killed and another six injured. The fire was put out and *Haida* stayed in action, but before the night was over a nearmiss had also knocked out 'A' mounting.

For almost the rest of August, *Haida* was undergoing repairs at Plymouth while two new 'A' and 'Y' mountings were installed.

At the end of August *Haida* and *Iroquois* met *Jeanne D'Arc* in the Bay of Biscay and escorted her to Cherbourg. The cruiser was taking fifty members of the French Provisional Government from Algiers on their way to Paris.

There was very little enemy activity now. The 10th DF spent quite a lot of time contacting local resistance groups who were taking back control of their areas from beaten (and from still active) German garrisons. *Haida* and *Kelvin* spent 4/5th September patrolling off Ushant to intercept any German vessels trying to escape from Brest to La Rochelle. Nothing happened as the two destroyers headed southwards. They therefore sent some arms ashore to the FFI on the Ile d'Yeu and continued to the mouth of the Gironde. They tried to make contact with the FFI near Arcachon without result. They also investigated a reported minefield off St Jean de Luz near the Franco-Spanish frontier and then headed north again during the night.

By the morning of 6th September they were off Les Sables. *Haida* was only three miles from the shore with *Kelvin* covering farther out. An FFI tug came out and *Haida* handed over some arms and supplies. They sent a landing party ashore to obtain detailed information about German troop dispositions. About midday, a couple of German vedettes or patrol craft came round the coast. They were intercepted and surrendered after being hit with MG fire. *Haida* and *Kelvin* started to tow the craft into Les Sables, but *Haida*'s sank and the Tribal rescued her own prize crew.

Kelvin's vedette was carrying AA and anti-tank weapons, small arms, a nebelwerfer and radio sets. All this equipment was presented to the FFI to be used against its former owners. The vedette also yielded some interesting documents and these were taken back to Plymouth, together with the prisoners and some German soldiers captured by the FFI on the Ile d'Yeu.

Haida's first commission was now ending and she prepared for her first home refit. She embarked all the necessary stores and equipment; there was a farewell speech by the C-in-C Plymouth and on the evening of 22nd September *Haida* slipped out of the Sound cheered by all ships in harbour. A week later more cheers, bands, sirens – and drizzle – greeted her as she entered Halifax harbour.

The refit was completed on 12th December, but it was another month before she arrived back at Plymouth. Then new radar was fitted, there were more trials and workups at Scapa Flow, and it was not until 19th March 1945, that *Haida* could take part in her next warlike activity.

She and *Iroquois* helped escort carriers in a FAA minelaying operation off Granesund in Norway. They were back at Scapa Flow on 21st March, but from the 24th to 28th, *Haida* and *Iroquois* were out again with a carrier strike against shore installations and coastal shipping in the Trondheim area.

On 7th April, *Haida* went to Greenock to collect seven Russian subchasers. Heavy gales forced the little ships to shelter in Loch Ewe and then in Thurso Bay, but after fuelling at Skaalefiord, they met JW66 on the 19th. The convoy had sailed from Greenock four days before. Its powerful escort included *Huron* and *Iroquois*. A Swordfish crashed taking off from *Vindex* on 22nd April, but *Haida* was on hand. Pilot and observer were picked up and returned safely to their carrier.

Although it was obvious that the war was almost over, the U-boats were not letting up. A couple of merchantmen had been torpedoed recently off Kola, so JW66's escorts dropped 300 scare depth-charges, while *Haida* and *Iroquois* laid smokescreens at high speed to cover the flanks of the convoy. By midnight on the 25/26th, all ships were anchored at Vaenga.

The Russians had arranged a special party to celebrate their entry into Berlin. The Red Army Theatre laid on a show and in return *Huron* invited over a hundred Russian ratings to dinner. Outside Kola, the 19th Escort Group had just sunk two U-boats and had themselves lost *Goodall*. Both *Haida* and *Iroquois* were nearmissed by torpedoes when RA66 sailed. The convoy had to drive off U-boats and shadowing aircraft and then fight their way through snowstorms and gales. *Haida*, *Huron* and *Iroquois* arrived at Scapa Flow on 6th May. Their last Russian convoy was over. Two days later they celebrated VE-Day.

The next day *Iroquois* went to Rosyth to help *Apollo* take Crown Prince Olaf to Oslo. *Iroquois* then went on to Copenhagen to join *Devonshire*, *Dido* and *Savage* in guarding the German cruiser *Prinz Eugen* and *Nurnberg* on their way to Kiel.

Iroquois returned to Scapa Flow to paint ship on 15th May. *Haida* and *Huron* had already finished this task and sailed the following day with *Berwick*. A German M-class minesweeper led them up Trondheimsfiord on the 17th. It was Norway's National Day and there were all sorts of celebrations, including a memorable tea-party for 1,500 children on board *Haida*.

But there was still another war to be finished and on 4th June *Haida*, *Huron* and *Iroquois* embarked a number of RCN passengers and left Greenock. They arrived at Halifax on 10th June and immediately began a tropicalisation refit. But Japan surrendered, the rest of the refit was suspended and *Haida* was paid off on 20th March 1946.

Within a year work had begun to fit her for her return to service. By the time it was completed she had a lattice foremast, and her AA armament included four 20mm and four 40mm guns. But just for a while she was dogged by bad luck. Her wheel-house caught fire and she had to be repaired. Then a boiler tube burst and she had to have more repairs. At last in May 1947, she was ready to return to the fleet.

For the next three years *Haida* and her newer sistership *Nootka* took part in exercises and visits up and down the eastern coasts of North America. Winter exercises were usually carried out in the Caribbean while Bermuda afforded fine weather for painting ship.

On 16th July, *Haida* went to *Micmac*'s aid after her collision with *Yarmouth County*.

Nootka also bumped *Haida*'s starboard quarter while berthing at Halifax in September after a navigational aids survey in the Bay of Fundy.

One of the most memorable incidents of this period was Operation Scuppered. At the end of the Second World War, the 1,144-ton U-190 surrendered to the RCN. She was used in various experiments and publicity cruises and her demise was planned for 21st October. The tug *Riverton* would tow U-190, painted with red and yellow horizontal stripes, into position 50 miles south-east of Halifax. First of all, rocket-firing Fireflies would attack and then *Haida* and *Nootka* would hole her with 4.7in gunfire. Seafire fighter-bombers would finish her off and, as the wreck was sliding to the bottom, *New Liskeard* would fire her hedgehog at the echo. That was the plan.

What actually happened on Trafalgar Day 1947 was this. U-190 was already settling by the stern as the Fireflies pulled away. *Nootka* had just enough time to get off eight shells before U-190 upended and disappeared. *New Liskeard* hurriedly fired her hedgehog, *Nootka* let go a pattern of depth-charges and the echo was gone. And that was that.

Most of the post-war exercises involved naval aircraft and for much of her time *Haida* accompanied *Warrior* or *Magnificent* or *Bonaventure*, acting as escort or plane guard. Twice in August 1948, *Haida* picked up ditched aircrew off Cape Breton Island, once within two minutes of the aircraft hitting the water.

In September 1948, *Magnificent*, *Haida* and *Nootka* headed north up the coast of Labrador. Carrier and destroyers parted company in Hudson Strait and the two Tribals went on into Hudson Bay visiting Churchill and a number of Eskimo settlements. It was the first time that major RCN warships had been there and the whole idea was to operate in Arctic conditions in a barren region. Shore parties explored the coast and provided medical treatment for isolated Eskimo families, while motor-boat crews learned how to push growlers away from anchor cables.

Another series of carrier exercises took place in the Caribbean in March 1949. *Magnificent* had just come back from a transatlantic ferry trip, her return deck cargo including spare Tribal propellers. One of these had parted its lashing during a gale, slid gracefully over the side and headed for the bottom of the Atlantic.

Afterwards *Magnificent*, *Haida* and *Nootka* went on down to the West Indies. En route *Nootka* lost two men overboard, but they were picked up by *Magnificent*. The Tribal was able to return the favour later when she rescued the pilots of a Firefly and a Sea Fury that came down in the sea. The only item not recovered was *Haida*'s anchor lost during a gale. The group carried out exercises with West Coast ships and then returned to Halifax.

On 4th June, *Magnificent* ran aground off Port Mouton and was stuck for four hours. Both Tribals helped her get off. *Haida* then escorted '*Maggie*' to Halifax while *Nootka* recovered all cable and wire with the aid of divers and a glass-bottomed boat. The group's summer troubles were not quite over, for on 27th July the towing pennant of a small target fouled *Haida*'s port propeller. She had to go into Sydney to clear it in dock.

All the Canadian Tribals took Cadets, Reservists, Navy League Essay winners, and all sorts of passengers to sea for little trips. All of them took part in Navy Week

displays, *Haida* once providing a daily climax to the demonstrations by steaming down Halifax harbour firing her guns and laying a smokescreen.

In November 1949, *Magnificent*, *Haida* and *Swansea* were carrying out deck-landing exercises off Nova Scotia when they heard that a B29 had ditched several hundred miles off Bermuda. On the 19th they were approaching its position and *Magnificent* flew off her search planes. *Haida* was acting as plane guard, rolling 42° in a Force 6 wind and heavy seas. About 1330 the aircraft began landing on. It was now very rough and seas were breaking over *Magnificent*'s flight deck. The last aircraft had to go round five times.

Meanwhile a B17 had started orbiting something to the south and had then dropped a parachute. *Haida* had to wait until the last Firefly had landed and then at 1435 headed for the B17's position. A US destroyer was also on the way and the rescue became a race. *Haida* was making 26½ knots. Water was coming on board continually, but only a stanchion up forward got bent. By 1550, *Haida* had picked up 15 survivors from a liferaft and was on her way to Bermuda. It so happened that the B29 co-pilot came from Texas, and in gratitude all *Haida*'s crew were enrolled as Honorary Texans.

In December *Haida* was run down and employed as a Depot and Accommodation Ship for the Senior Officer Reserve Ships at Halifax. In July 1950, she began conversion to an escort destroyer. When completed she had four 4in, two 3in/50 and four 40mm guns, four torpedo tubes, two triple-barrelled squid mortars, and two rocket launchers. She had a new aluminium lattice foremast, improved radar, whin radio aerials, and catwalks over the torpedo tubes. Her complement was 240 and her displacement had reached 2,200 tons (2,800 tons full load). *Haida* recommissioned on 15th March 1952.

For her shakedown cruise she accompanied *Magnificent* on a visit to Plymouth in June. Apart from a defective steering motor which was put right at Plymouth, there were no problems. After more exercises at Halifax, *Haida* completed with the necessary stores and sailed for her Korean duty on 27th September.

After passing through the Panama Canal and crossing the Pacific, *Haida* arrived at Sasebo on 12th November for maintenance, repairs and stores. A week later she began her first ten days' carrier screening and inshore patrols off the west coast of Korea. At the beginning of December 1952, *Haida* went round to Yang-do on the east coast and spent three uneventful days patrolling there. On 6th December, *Haida* and *USS Moore* shelled the Songjin marshalling yards. A 76mm battery returned the fire but a passing spotter aircraft directed *Haida*'s 3in/50 guns onto it.

Haida fired several more bombardments at gun positions in the Songjin area. She also tried her hand at a couple of trains on the coastal railway, but without success. On the 18/19th December however, *Haida*'s starshell illuminated a train and 4in and 3in shells ploughed into it. About ten boxcars were destroyed, but the engine was uncoupled and escaped, so *Haida* still did not qualify for membership of the Train-busters Club.

After spending Christmas in Japan, *Haida* carried out two west coast carrier and

patrol assignments in January 1953, firing a couple of minor bombardments in the Haeju-man. In March, *Haida* was back on the east coast, chasing a lone locomotive south of Songjin, but most nights the moon was too bright for the trains to run.

West coast work and a spell at Hong Kong occupied *Haida*'s time until 26/27th May, when at last she joined the Trainbusters Club. 4in and 3in shells stopped a train just south of Songjin. An aircraft illuminated the wreck with flares and *Haida* finished it off. Later that night she fired at another train along the coast, but it was too far inland and the shells missed.

Commander Lantier was now a dedicated train hunter. On the 29/30th 4in gunfire stopped yet another train north of Iwon. Again the locomotive got away and hid in a tunnel, refusing to come out. *Haida* destroyed the rest of the train and returned to Yang-do, sinking a mine en route. Gunfire support for minesweepers and several more unsuccessful train shoots filled up the next week. *Haida* left Sasebo on 12th June, proceeding via the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean to reach Halifax on 22nd July. She left for her second Korean tour on 14th December, going out through the Panama Canal. The Korean War was now over and these Armistice-enforcing patrols were uneventful, an unsuccessful search for two missing aircraft providing most activity. *Haida* continued heading westward and came home via the Mediterranean again, arriving at Halifax on 1st November 1954.

Exercises, visits, rescues and refits occupied the rest of *Haida*'s service life. Usually two or more of the RCN Tribals were always together and were frequently occupied in anti-submarine exercises. Sometimes it was a straightforward submarine hunt, sometimes they practised convoy escort and sometimes they looked for a submarine pretending to fire missiles at North American targets.

One particular exercise period off Bermuda in the spring of 1955 provided some interesting moments for *Magnificent*, *Haida* and *Micmac*. The US submarine *Argonaut* asked Commander Smyth of *Micmac* to fire a full pattern of real live squid – at a safe distance – so that his submarines could get some idea of what they might come up against one day. This was done and the submarine's commanding officer assured *Micmac* that henceforth his crew would have a healthy respect for squid bombs – even at a safe distance. Later on Commander Smyth and Commander Browne (of *Haida*) went across to *Magnificent* for a conference. Returning, their motor-boat broke down and for a while two captains were adrift in mid-Atlantic until they were rescued by their respective ships.

In the autumn of 1955 *Haida*, *Huron* and *Micmac* accompanied *Magnificent* and other RCN vessels in NATO exercises in the North Atlantic. *Huron* lost a carley float in the rough weather they encountered, but that did not prevent her trying to find the crew of a crashed Avenger (later picked up by helicopter). After further NATO exercises in the Western Approaches and the North Sea, the RCN ships visited a number of ports in Europe and then went into the Mediterranean for more exercises, goodwill visits and children's parties. It was *Micmac* who suffered bumps here.

At Genoa, she was mooring Mediterranean style (i.e. her stern only to the jetty and with her bows held out at right angles with both anchors) when she dented her

stern slightly. When coming alongside in orthodox fashion at Gibraltar, a 25-knot wind pushed her starboard side onto a catamaran.

Haida was to visit Europe and the Mediterranean again as well as a whole range of North American and West Indian ports. Quite a few varied incidents occurred during these years.

In September 1956, she escorted *Algonquin* into Halifax after the latter's foretopmast had been buckled by Hurricane Carla. *Haida* also helped escort *Lauzon* and *Portage* into Halifax after they had collided in March 1957. A year later she recovered the pilot of a Banshee that had toppled over *Bonaventure*'s flight deck, but his lifejacket had not inflated and he could not be revived. On 15th July 1960, *Haida* landed a special war-party of officers and ratings to escort Hosaqami aboard *Kootenay* for passage to Portsmouth. Hosaqami was a totem pole carved for the RCN gunnery branch to present to *HMS Excellent* to mark the end of RCN gunnery courses at Whale Island.

August 1960 saw *Haida*, *Iroquois* and *Nootka* searching unsuccessfully for two of the crew of a Tracker aircraft. The other two had been picked up by *Columbia*.

In mid-March 1961, *Haida*, *Huron* and *Nootka* were taking part in NATO exercises off Nova Scotia when they were ordered to search for seventeen Nova Scotia fishermen. Their search was not successful, and all three Tribals started to ice up. So much built up on *Haida* that she had to heave-to and did not thaw out until she got into the Gulf Stream.

Meanwhile *Nootka* had been thrown about quite heavily and one man had badly injured his hand. They tried to rush him to hospital in Halifax but a 60-knot wind was blowing, the destroyer was sheeted in ice and could only make 8 knots. Then the fishing-boat *Mysquaro* sent out an SOS. *Nootka* turned to help her, the wind caught the Tribal broadside on, she listed some 10-15° to leeward – and stayed there. She righted very sluggishly when opposite helm was applied, so *Kootenay* was asked to help the trawler while *Nootka* resumed her course for Halifax. Chipping parties later cleared almost 180 tons of ice from her decks and upperworks.

In spite of these alarms, *Haida*'s captain declared that the most hazardous day of his command was when he took the children of the ship's company for a cruise around Halifax harbour.

These last few years, although militarily peaceful, had proved wearing for *Haida* and the strain was beginning to tell. Funnel caps were fitted to protect electronic gear and in January 1958 she had to undergo hull repairs. Then in March 1958, her foretopmast was carried away with the shock of bombardment exercises. It was strengthened and replaced in Miami. On 12th December 1958 *Haida* was returning across the Atlantic from a Mediterranean and European cruise when the steering wheel suddenly disengaged. No sooner had this been repaired than the forward magazine had to be shored up. Two days later the foretopmast fell down again.

Haida began 1959 in dockyard hands, while these defects were made good. She was back by the end of January with a weakness in the starboard squid magazine. This time it was decided to wait until her next scheduled refit in April. *Haida* lasted

out the next series of exercises, although her new foretopmast had to be resecured just before it fell down again.

The refit was completed in January 1960, trials were finished the following month and *Haida* departed for Bermuda to spend March working-up. After only one day's exercises she got condenser trouble and nineteen boiler tubes had to be replaced. Next week there were repeated equipment failures and only one exercise could be carried out. By the end of March breakdowns were becoming fewer but on 3rd April, her steering gear failed as she was leaving Ireland Island Dockyard. Fortunately no misadventure resulted.

A final inspection at Halifax approved her efficiency, but in May a hull survey discovered a weakness in the starboard side. So for most of June and July, *Haida* was again being repaired – this time without going into drydock. One plate was replaced at the fo'c'sle break and some internal members renewed. *Haida* was now fit for service again – but not for long. During a self-refit period in November, divers found cracks in some bottom plates, and she had to be drydocked again for the rest of the month.

Haida's next major repairs took place in June-July 1961 and were occasioned by the gales and ice of the previous March. The repair was undertaken by the Marine Industries Yard at Sorel on the St Lawrence and was unusual in that *Haida* was hauled sideways out of the water and up the slipways.

A self-refit in November 1961 saw *Haida* through until March 1962, when she had to abandon an Atlantic exercise because cracks appeared in the port bow plates. Repairs and major overhauls were not completed until the following December and then full-power trials showed up defective bearings in the main engines and boiler room fans. Inspections found more engine room defects and more repairs had to be carried out, not being completed until 15th February 1963.

Trials and workups were all finished by 25th April when *Haida* left Halifax on her last cruise – a publicity and goodwill tour of the St Lawrence and Great Lakes. She was accompanied at various times by other Canadian warships including *Nootka* who distinguished herself by rescuing three people after their yacht capsized in Kingston Harbour. *Nootka* also righted and salvaged the yacht. But somehow it was *Haida*'s show – the war veteran's last performance. They visited Chicoutimi, Quebec, Trois Rivières, Montreal, Toronto, Sarnia, Cleveland, Kingston, Picton, Port Hope, Oshawa, Port Dalhousie, Cobourg, Grimsby, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Rochester, Windsor, Lake St Clair and Detroit. There were pirate parties for local orphans and shore parades. A 10-ton mobile TV studio was lowered onto the port-side of the torpedo-tubes and a film was made about *Haida*, including scenes of her guns being fired for the last time.

Reservists, veterans, Sea Cadets, businessmen, students and teachers were taken on harbour cruises. Among the guests on one of these trips was an airline pilot, Captain Neil Bruce. His brother had served in *Iroquois* and was now a Sea Cadet officer. Captain Bruce became leader of a group who wanted to buy *Haida* and preserve Canada's most famous warship at Toronto. So the 'Preserve *Haida* Organisation' was formed and their initial plans put forward.

However, the RCN had not quite finished with her. She arrived at Halifax on 16th August 1963 and began to pay off. Her ammunition, stores, provisions, and finally her crew went ashore. On 11th October 1963 she was decommissioned and placed in Operational Reserve. It was intended that she should be kept at Sydney in this category for at least a year.

In the winter of 1963/64, the Canadian Government announced an economy drive in the Defence Department. *Haida* was declared surplus and was immediately handed over to Crown Assets for disposal. *Haida*'s friends hurriedly speeded up their plans and succeeded in raising $20,000 to buy her. The RCN did what they could to help. They towed her to Halifax for docking and stowed as much surplus World War II gear aboard her as they could. There was however no question of refitting her to her 1943 appearance – she had been altered too much. Still, it was intended that she should be repainted in her wartime colours and her original pennant number should be painted up. Her funnel cowls would also be removed and, of course, her guns were mutilated so that they could not be fired again.

The last voyage of so many ships is a sad thing, to a final battle, a tragic accident, or a wrecker's yard. Not so for *Haida*. Her last voyage was the beginning of a new life as a living memorial to the officers and men of the RCN and a permanent remembrancer of the Tribal-class destroyers.

On 25th August 1964 'Happy *Haida*' arrived at Toronto to a great reception from cheering crowds, firefloats, press and TV men, and her first captain, Vice-Admiral DeWolf.

Commanding Officers

Cdr H. C. DeWolf, RCN 30th August 1943 – 18th December 1944.
Lt-Cdr R. P. Welland, DSC, RCN 19th December 1944 – 2nd September 1945.
Lt-Cdr F. B. Caldwell, RCN 3rd March 1947 – 11th December 1947.
Lt-Cdr A. F. Pickard, OBE, RCN 12th December 1947 – 15th May 1949.
Lt-Cdr E. T. G. Madgwick, RCN 16th May 1949 – 12th January 1950.
Cdr R. A. Webber, DSC, RCN 13th January 1950 – 31st December 1951.
Cdr D. Lantier, RCN 1st January 1952 – 28th October 1953.
Capt J. A. Charles, CD, RCN 29th October 1953 – 15th December 1954.
Cdr V. Browne, CD, RCN 16th December 1954 – 10th July 1956.
Cdr H. R. Beck, CD, RCN 11th July 1956 – 6th April 1958.
Cdr J. Husher, CD, RCN 7th April 1958 – 2nd September 1960.
Cdr G. S. Clark, CD, RCN 3rd September 1960 – 2nd August 1961.
Cdr D. C. Rutherford, CD, RCN 3rd August 1961 – 19th July 1962.
Cdr W. H. Atkinson, DSC, CD, RCN 20th July 1962 – 22nd September 1963.
Lt-Cdr D. K. Gamblin, CD, RCN 23rd September 1963 – 11th October 1963.

Pennant Numbers

G63 July 1943 – January 1952
DDE215 February 1952 – August 1964
G63 September 1964 – Date

HMCS Huron

Third of name

Builders: Vickers-Armstrong, High Walker Yard, The Tyne
Engined by: Parsons Marine Steam Turbine Co, Wallsend
Ordered: April 1941
Laid Down: 15th July 1941
Launched: 25th June 1942 (by the Countess of Minto)
Commissioned: 19th July 1943

HURON HAD two very different tasks while working up at Scapa Flow. On 12th August 1943 she accompanied the destroyer *Onslow* taking King George VI from Scrabster to visit the Home Fleet. A fortnight later a Skua ditched off the Orkneys. The crew bailed out safely, but the aircraft had not suffered much damage and was still afloat, so *Huron* was asked to try to salvage it.

It was a difficult job as the waterlogged Skua was too heavy to lift. Some volunteers then got into the cockpit and bailed it out until it could be hoisted inboard. It took up most of the iron deck from the break of the fo'c'sle to the quarterdeck. The securing wires were fixed to various parts of the ship including the funnel. Back at Scapa Flow, the thing was lowered upside down onto a barge, and that was the last they saw of it.

Huron completed her working-up on 6th September and on 1st October left Scapa Flow in Operation Holder. *Onslaught*, *Huron* and *Iroquois* had already embarked officers, technicians, food and naval stores. They fuelled in the Faeroes and proceeded at 25 knots to Russia. Arriving at Murmansk on 6th October, they delivered their passengers and cargo to the Senior British Naval Officer, embarked members of the Russian Diplomatic Corps and sailed the same evening. The poor quality fuel provided in Russia kept their return speed down to 14 knots and as soon as they were back in the UK, *Huron* had to go to Rosyth for a boiler clean. Berthing alongside the oiler on her return to Scapa Flow, *Huron* damaged her stern and had to go to Leith for repairs. Fortunately, stiffening had been worked into her hull during construction, so she did not suffer so grievously from the Arctic as some of the earlier Tribals. Even so, it was not until 14th November, that she was again ready for service.

Haida, *Huron* and *Iroquois* were engaged on Arctic work until the New Year. They escorted convoys to and from Russia, and went to Spitsbergen. Then while the other Tribals went round to Plymouth, *Huron* stayed with the Home Fleet for another Russian convoy. The destroyers left Scapa Flow on 22nd January 1944 and then sailed from Seidisfiord to meet JW56B. JW56A had had a difficult passage, so RA56A was cancelled and that convoy's escort augmented JW56B off Bear Island. A diversion did not shake off the U-boats, but the destroyers kept them at a

distance until U-278 blew off *Hardy*'s stern with an acoustic torpedo. The destroyer had to be sunk but she was avenged when U-314 was later destroyed.

JW56B arrived at Kola on 1st February. Two days later RA56 sailed, *Huron* taking home several service passengers, including fourteen *Hardy* survivors. They arrived at Scapa Flow on 10th February, after an uneventful passage. A week later *Huron* was making for Plymouth.

Ashanti, *Athabaskan* and *Haida* were there already. *Huron* shared in most of their Channel exercises and operations, including the destruction of T29 on the night of 25/26th April. As the Tribals milled round the dying ship, a lone oerlikon gunner swung his gun round, raking his attackers. *Huron* was hit on the bridge and upper-works. The port navigation lights were smashed and the port side of the stokers mess was hit. Another shell shot away the pompom feed rail, killing one of the gunners.

Huron was further damaged by her collision with *Ashanti*. Besides damage to the port side of her hull the main bulkhead between No. 1 and 2 boiler rooms was buckled for 18 inches. The port cutter and its davits were smashed, the guard rails and stanchions bent inwards and the torpedo-davit damaged. Yet *Huron* returned safely to Plymouth and repairs were completed on 7th May in time for the D-Day operations.

Huron contributed in large measure to the destruction of ZH1 and Z32 on the night of 8/9th June and on the 12th helped *Haida* simulate a landing on the Cherbourg Peninsula. On the night of the 27/28th, however, *Huron* was in company with *Eskimo* when the two Tribals had a sharp engagement with a group of pugnacious trawlers. A few nights later *Huron* was towing *Eskimo* back to Plymouth after her collision with *Javelin*.

So it was that on 8/9th July, *Tartar* and *Huron* left Plymouth to sweep between Roches Douvres and Les Minquiers. At 0324 they intercepted a couple of small vessels that made smoke and tried to escape at 9 knots. The range was obscured by smoke and the Tribals could not get good radar contacts, but it soon became apparent that *Tartar* and *Huron* were after four minesweeping trawlers. The enemy started firing rocket flares as some sort of signal to the shore batteries, who opened fire. Heavy shells dropped ahead of *Tartar*, and a smaller one alongside *Huron*. It caused splinter damage to *Huron*'s starboard superstructure and two ratings at a gun were slightly injured. *Tartar* ordered the Canadian 65th MTB Flotilla to intercept the trawlers, but they too were driven off by the shore guns. Three miles off the coast the chase was abandoned and the trawlers got into St Malo, although it was believed that one had been hit by *Tartar*.

Huron took part in an uneventful Kinetic patrol in the Bay of Biscay and arrived back at Plymouth on 3rd August. Next day she sailed for Halifax via Londonderry.

Huron arrived in Nova Scotia for refit on the 13th. It was completed and her trials were over by 20th November. She called at the Azores and on 28th November arrived at Cardiff for new radar and target indication equipment. Sea trials of this gear were completed on 20th January 1945, but *Huron* still had her working-up to

do at Scapa Flow. Then for most of February and the whole of March, she was employed on escort duties in the Western Approaches.

In April *Haida*, *Huron* and *Iroquois* escorted their last Russian convoy. After sharing in the liberation of Scandinavia, all three returned to Halifax where they prepared for service in the Pacific. The refits were suspended in August and *Huron* went into reserve.

On 28th February 1950, *Huron* completed a refit before returning to service. Lieutenant-Commander Madgwick fell ill during her trials and working-up, but they had been completed by April when he returned. After a number of exercises, *Magnificent*, *Huron* and *Micmac* left Halifax on 23rd August. The Canadian Special Service Squadron was being sent on a diplomatic and goodwill cruise around Europe.

They visited ports in Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, France and Portugal, and still found time to engage in a number of NATO anti-submarine and AA exercises. They all arrived back at Halifax on 27th November, and *Huron* began a refit prior to Korean War service.

She left Halifax on 22nd January 1951. The weather was so cold that her siren and the Navy band instruments froze up and had to be thawed out before any sound would come. She was accompanied by *Micmac* for the first stage of her journey. This was rather a mixed blessing for *Huron*, for, while berthing at Bermuda, strong winds caused *Micmac* to lean on *Huron*. She in turn was pushed against a jetty fender, which forced in a plate over No. 6 fuel tank. Soon seawater was contaminating the fuel. The USN hull surveyor at Colon reported that the damage was serious enough to warrant docking. Accordingly, *Micmac* returned to Halifax, while *Huron* passed through the Panama Canal and arrived at Long Beach on 6th February.

By 15th February, she was on her way again, but was further delayed at Pearl Harbor while she carried out extra starshell and air burst firing. *Huron* only took three hours to fuel and store at Kwajalein, but had to spend two days at Guam, while a crack in the starboard side of the hull was repaired. She arrived at Sasebo on 15th March.

Like so many other destroyers, *Huron*'s first Korean mission was screening carriers on the west coast. Then in April, she and *Athabaskan* went round to the east coast, and back again to the west coast later. On 4th May, one of *Glory*'s crew fell overboard during fuelling at sea. *Huron* lowered her whaler, but a helicopter got there first. The helicopter photographer was apparently so keen to get some good pictures that he fell in as well, so *Huron*'s whaler had somebody to rescue after all.

Huron was drydocked at Kure on 21st May to repair two cracked plates in her stern and this opportunity was also used to paint the ship's sides. She began her first inshore patrol on 27th May, covering the west coast right up to the Yalu River.

Huron's first interception occurred at dawn on 31st May when she stopped a junk, later handing the craft and its eight-man crew over to the ROKN at Taechong-do. After two days' bombardment of gun and mortar emplacements opposite Chodo, *Huron* boarded another junk, but this one was only carrying refugees – men, women and children.

On 6th June 1951, *Huron* was in the Inchon area looking for three US soldiers adrift in a small boat. Later they were reported safe so the ship's medical officer was sent ashore to treat a Korean lighthouse keeper suffering from stomach trouble and a cut foot. Two days later *Huron* arrived at Hong Kong for rest, repairs, anti-submarine and gunnery exercises.

There was more leave and refit later at Kure and then *Huron* was sent to the east coast of Korea for bombardment duties. From 26th to 30th June, *Huron* and the Colombian frigate *Almirante Padilla* shelled the coastal railway between Chongjin and Hungnam. The repair crews had developed the habit of sleeping in the tunnels during the day and coming out to deal with the damaged permanent way at night.

On 30th June/1st July, therefore, *Huron* closed to within 3,000 yards of the shore and fired starshell to light up a repair gang trying to fill the hole made by a collapsed bridge. Airbursts scattered the labourers and *Huron*'s gunnery instructor scored six consecutive hits on the girder bridge, but the repair train managed to get back into the tunnel.

On 5th July, *Huron* shelled Chongjin, setting fire to the railway station. A 76mm gun replied, but it did no damage and was silenced by the destroyer's close-range weapons. Two days later *Huron* hit a works train in the dock area of Chongjin, before leaving for Sasebo.

From 10th July until the end of the month, *Huron* screened *Glory* on the west coast, where *Cayuga* was also operating. *Huron* was then detached to patrol off Choppeki Point and on 2nd August exchanged mails and personnel with *HMNZS Rotoiti* off Chodo. Whilst there she fired twelve 4in shells at a village where sampans and junks were being collected for raiding UN-held islands.

After sprucing up at Kure, *Huron* went round to Sasebo where she embarked Rear-Admiral Scott-Moncrieff for a three-day trip to the Han River. A number of ships had been stranded there and the admiral wanted to see for himself what conditions were like.

Huron was at Sasebo for two days before leaving for home. Thick fog lasted most of the way to the Aleutians, and *Huron* also called at Esquimalt and various other west coast ports. She passed through the Panama Canal and arrived at Halifax on 21st September.

Huron was then converted to an escort destroyer with an armament of four 4in, two 3in/50 and four 40mm guns, two rocket flare launchers, four torpedo-tubes and two squids. Although work was completed by the end of 1952, trials, workups and exercises lasted until April 1953. She also took part in an unsuccessful search for a missing aircraft, and was drydocked in March to repair her side, damaged while berthing at Bermuda.

On 29th April, *Huron* and *Iroquois* set off for the Far East together. Both ships experienced serious engine and boiler room trouble off the Mexican coast. Investigation showed that shrimps were blocking the condenser inlets. Fourteen buckets full of the little creatures were removed from *Iroquois* alone.

Huron and *Iroquois* arrived at Sasebo on 17/18th June and within a week *Huron*

had joined *Bairoko*'s screen off Pengyong-do. After a brief stay at Sasebo from 3rd to 6th July, *Huron* joined the US destroyer force off Yang-do. She first sent her medical officer across to *Irwin*, who had been damaged by a Communist shell, and then looked for some trains to shoot at. She did fire at one but it escaped into a tunnel. However, *Huron*'s gunners helped to keep the area safe by sinking two mines.

It was a very foggy night off Yang-do on the 13/14th. Visibility varied from two miles to one cable and *Huron* kept her speed down to 12 knots. At 0038 she took the ground. She floated off at high tide, but waited until the *LSD Epping Forest* came to effect temporary repairs at dawn. A combat air patrol, three destroyers and a tug also arrived, escorting *Huron* to Sasebo at 5 knots. She arrived on the 18th. The Korean War ended nine days later.

A new bow section was built on once the relevant drawings had arrived from Canada. In the meantime, *Huron*'s crew were loaned out to other ships and helped in the armistice patrols. *Huron* was floated out on 6th October, beginning her trials later that month.

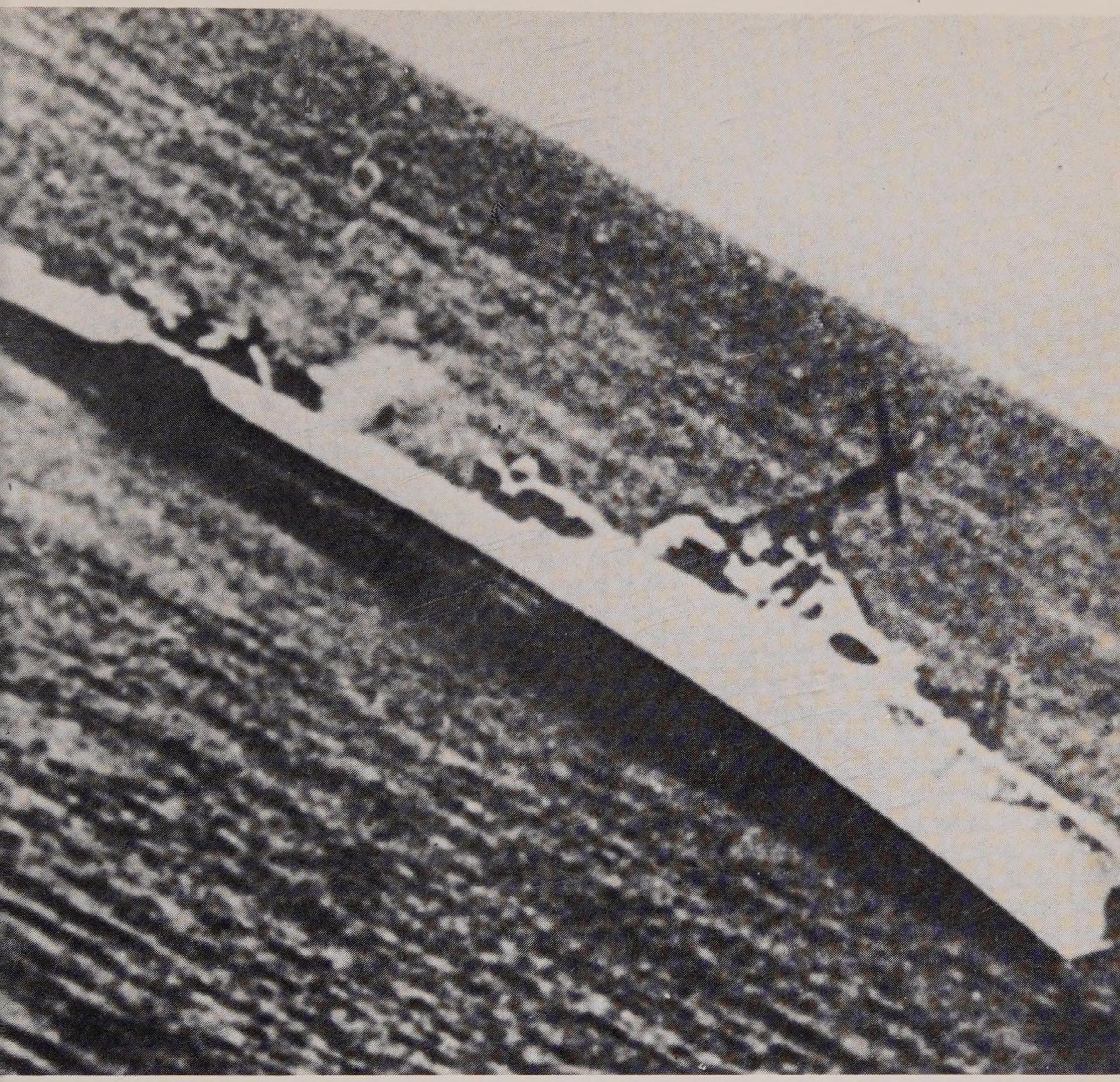
In November, *Huron* was on her way to Hong Kong when she ran into typhoon Cora. Twice during the night she broached to and wallowed beam on to the seas and 65-mph winds. One screw was stopped and revolutions for 20 knots rung down on the other, but she still refused to come round onto her original course. The only thing was to heave-to until the wind and sea allowed her to be brought round.

Huron was at Hong Kong from 19th to 27th and returned to Sasebo in weather almost as rough as her outward passage. Most of her time was now spent in carrier screening, gunnery, torpedo and anti-submarine exercises and on monotonous armistice patrols. On 4th January 1954, however, she began a few days' search for a missing Neptune. *Huron* covered a thousand miles more than any other ship in this operation, but eventually had to return to Sasebo as fuel was running short. She took with her two bodies and some gear recovered from the freezing waters by US destroyers. Nothing else was ever found.

Huron left Sasebo on 8th February returning to Halifax via Hong Kong, Singapore, Columbo, Aden, the Suez Canal, Malta, Gibraltar and Ponta Delgada. She encountered severe gales in the Mediterranean, while in the Atlantic she was forced to heave-to, although she tacked into the swell whenever possible. Upper deck lockers and three carley floats were swept overboard before she arrived home on 17th March, with only 9% of her fuel left. Her refit began next day.

Post-refit trials in July were encouraging. *Huron*'s full-power speed reached 31.3 knots. After an open day at Halifax she left for her next tour of Korean peace-keeping patrols on 1st August. The voyage was not uneventful.

First the port steering motor had to be repaired. Then Commander McCormack fell ill and Lieutenant-Commander Robbins took charge until a new captain arrived. On 12th September, there was an extra event at Sunday Divisions in order to present a special birthday cake to an able seaman who had missed his birthday when they crossed the International Dateline. Entering Kwajalein *Huron* ran into a sudden tropical squall which only lasted twenty minutes but was so thick the destroyer had

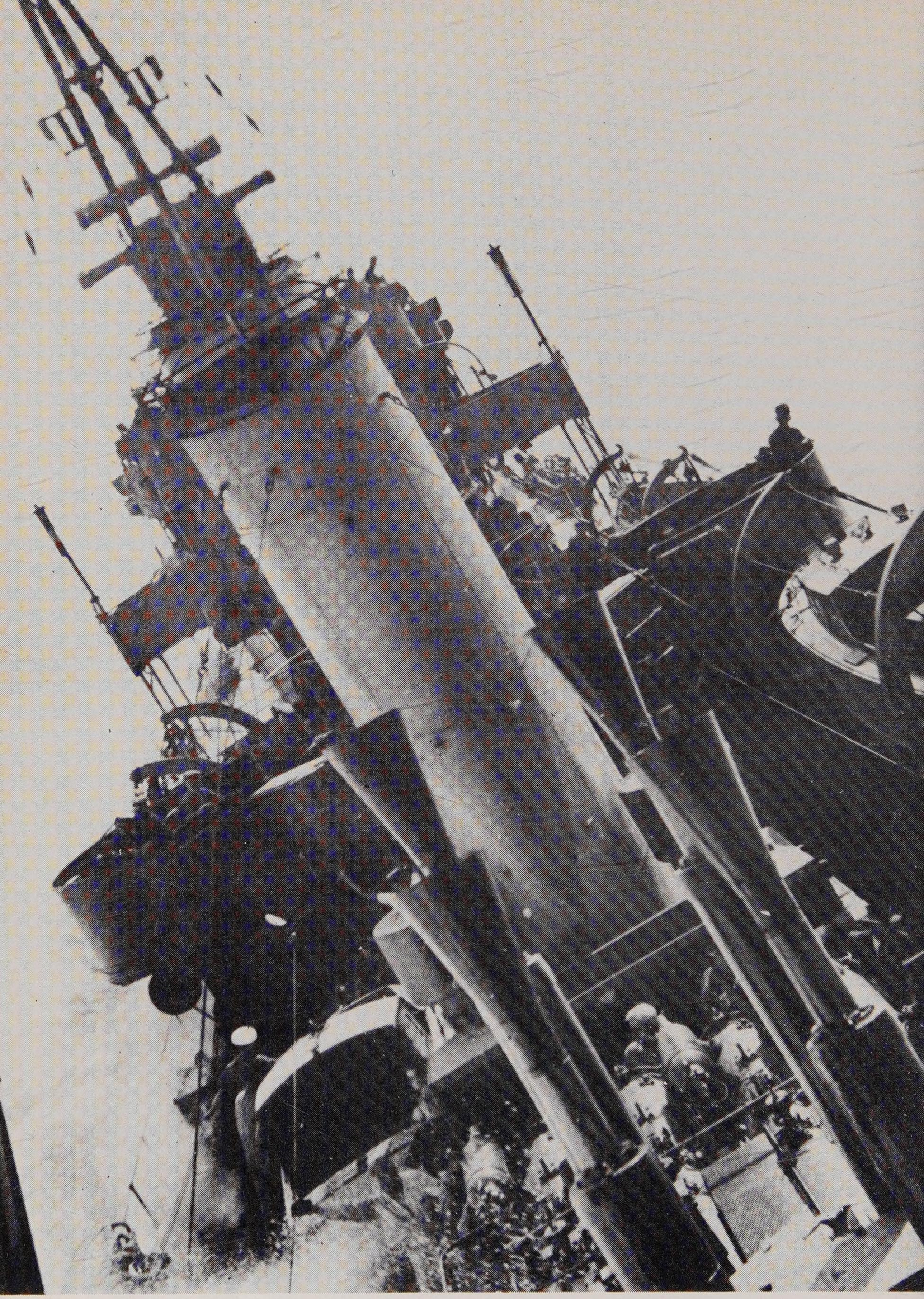


Bedouin sinking on 15th June 1942. [*IWM*

Ashanti and *Fury* exercising off Scapa Flow in late June 1942. Both destroyers have single oerlikons in the bridge wings and are also carrying Radar Types 285 and 290. Their MF/DF aerials have been moved to the front of the bridge. [*IWM*

High-level aircraft bombing PQ18 through cloud on 15th September 1942 nearmiss *Eskimo* and *Wheatland*. Note that the wartime censor has erased *Eskimo*'s pennant number. [*IWM*

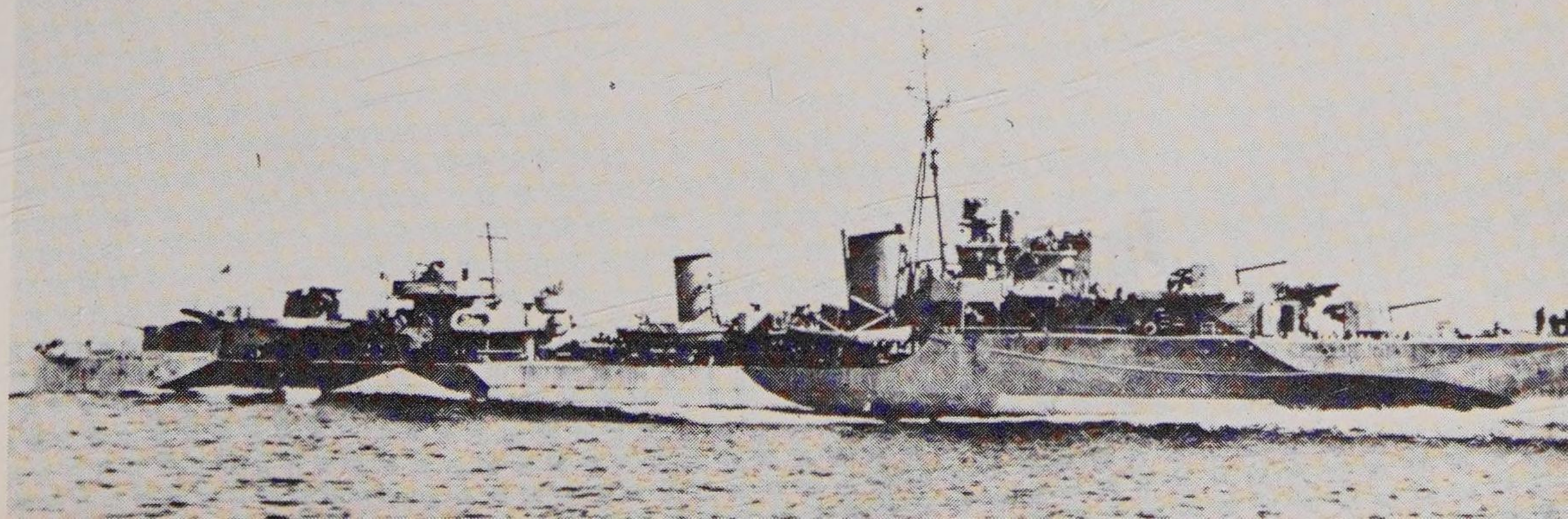
Left: Nubian at Bombay after her refit, September 1942. Her after-funnel has been cut down and her mainmast replaced by a light aerial spreader. There is a twin 4in. mounting in 'X' position and single oerlikons on the after superstructure and bridge wings. A splinter shield has been fitted around the 2pdr. guns. The depth-charge throwers have been resited, and just forward of them can be seen spare torpedo warheads. There are plenty of smoke floats and an enlarged escape scuttle below 'Y' mounting. Type 286M radar stands out clearly at the foretopmast-head. [*Admiral Sir Deric Holland-Martin*



Constructors and crew hang on as *Warramunga* heels over during builder's trials off Sydney in November 1942. The oerlikons have not been installed yet but the signalling semaphores can be seen in the bridge wings. [*IWM*

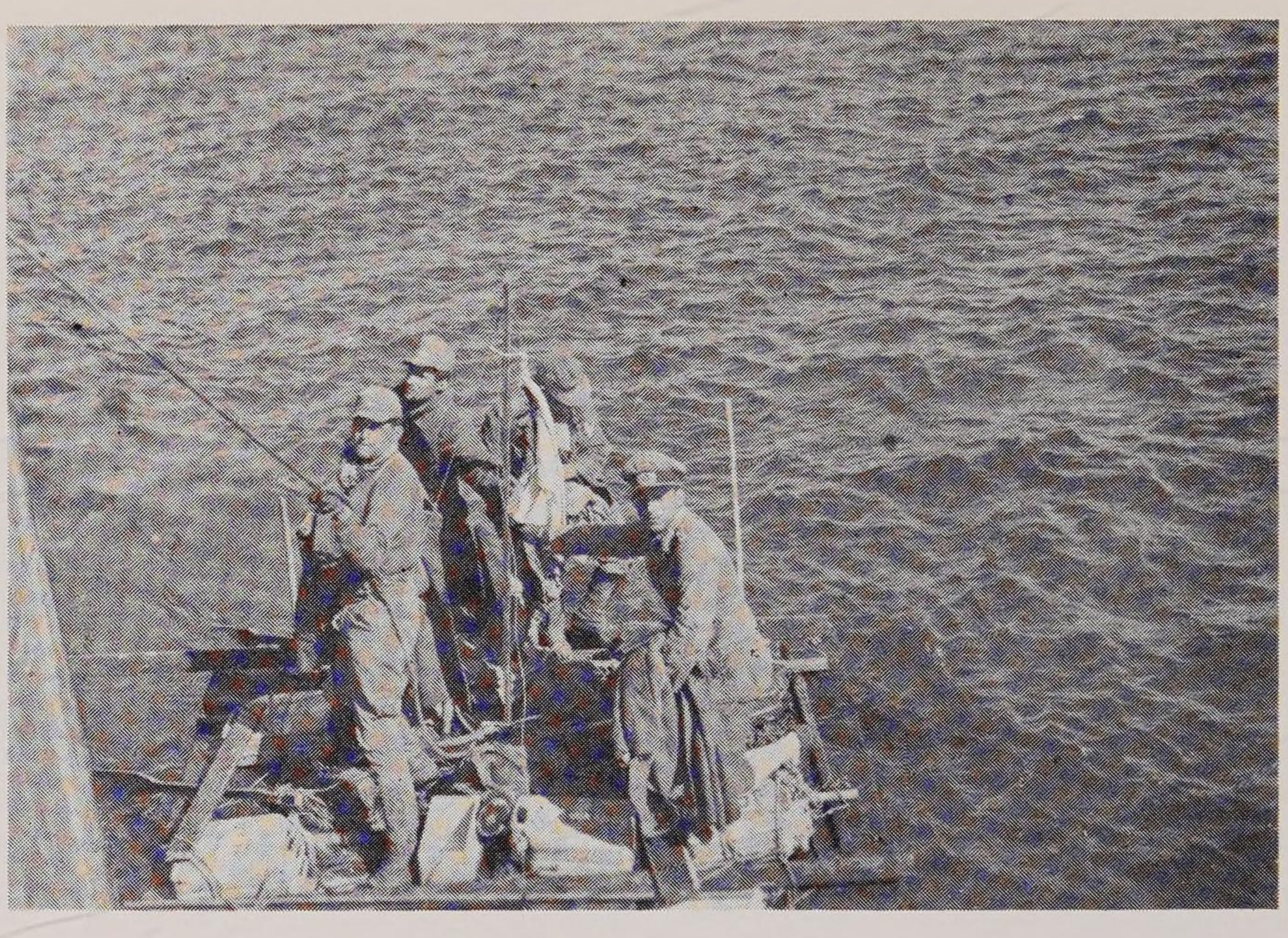
Warramunga's port depth-charge thrower. [*IWM*

Iroquois as completed in December 1942. The 2pdr. guns have changed places with the after conning position. Note that the wartime censor has tried to obliterate the pennant number. [*IWM*

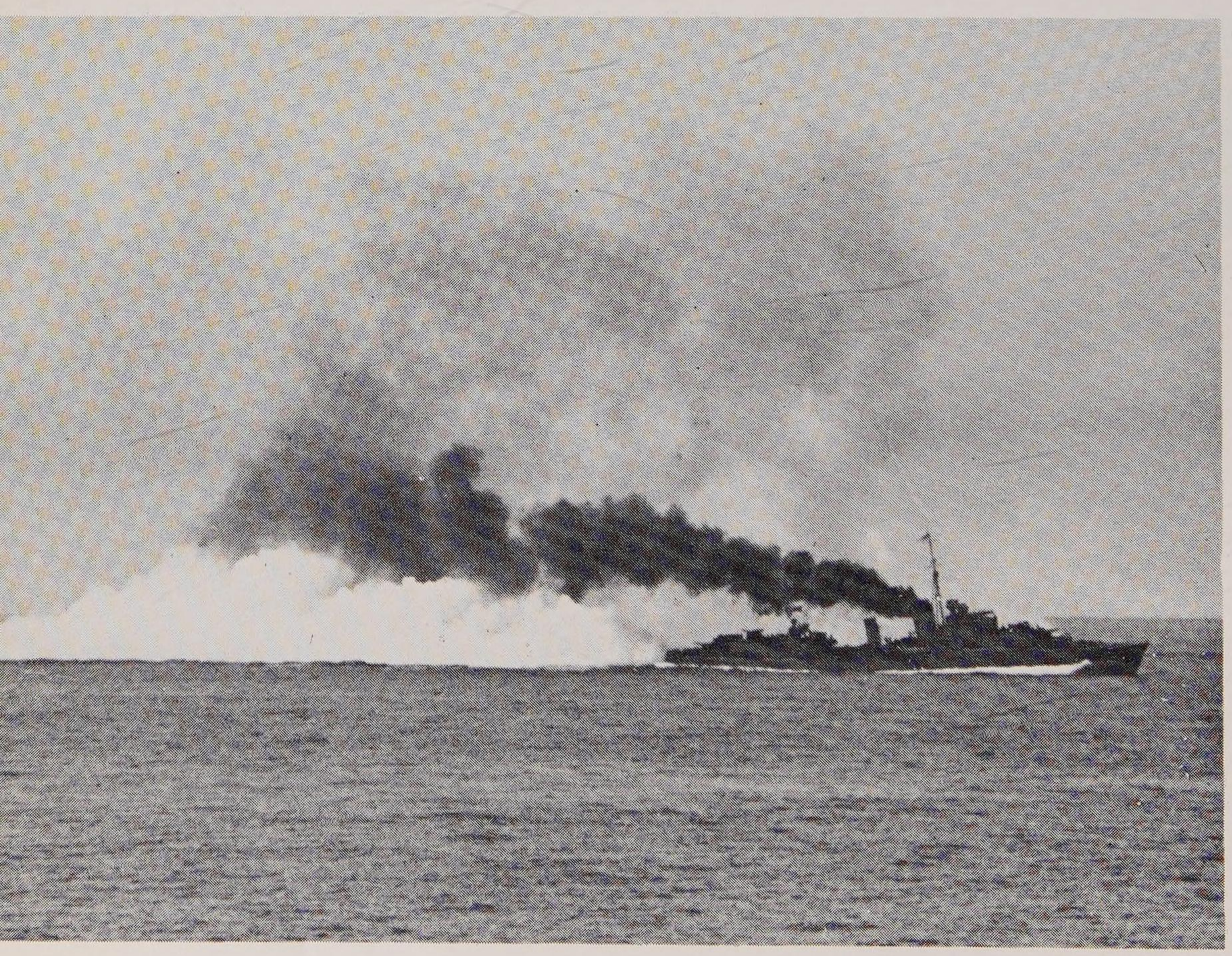


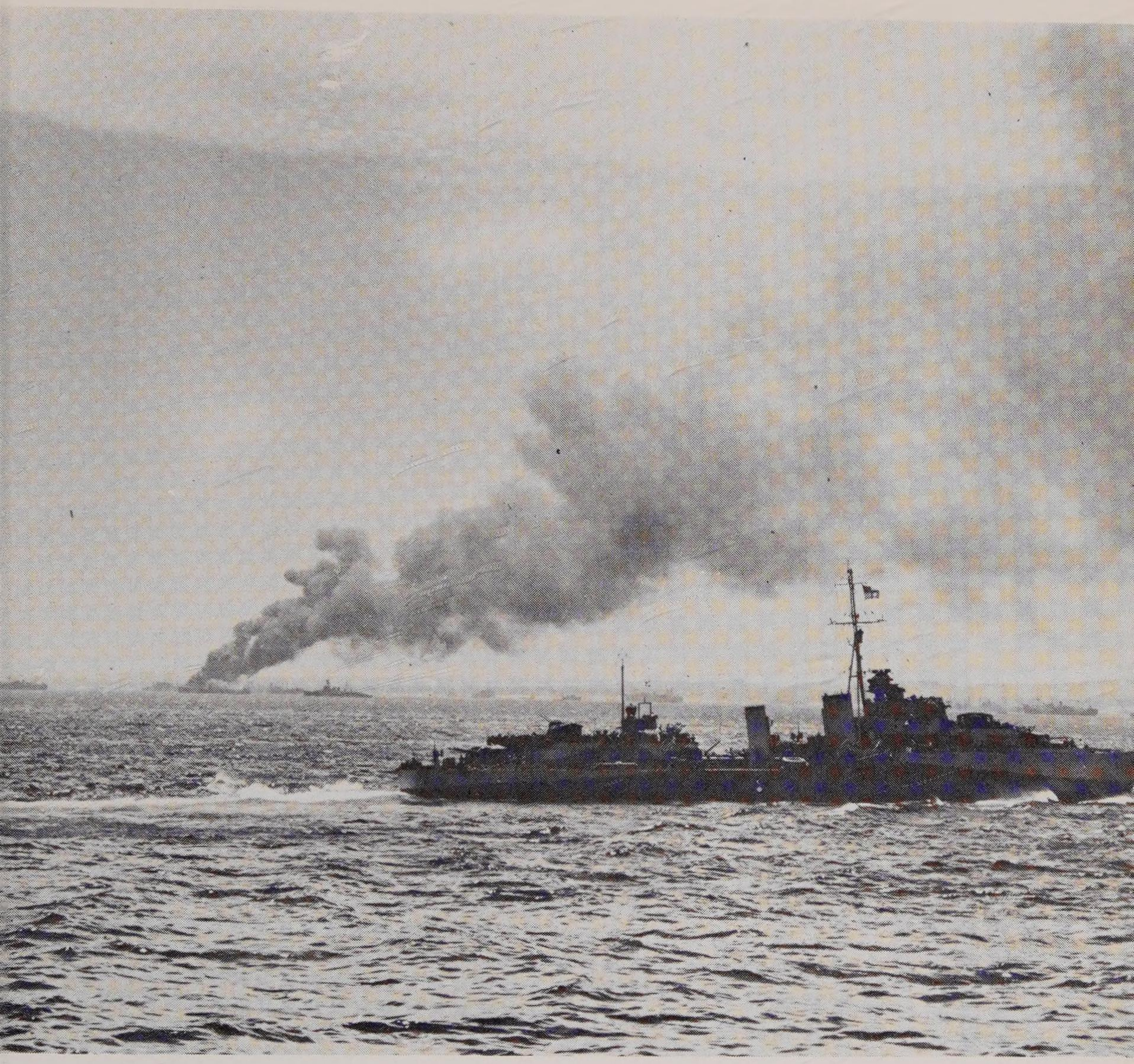
Nubian off Fort Kelibia during Operation Retribution, May 1943. [*IWM*

Left: Pakenham leads *Nubian* out of Grand Harbour, Malta, on a night's sweep early in April 1943. [*IWM*



Nubian finds four German soldiers on a trans-Mediterranean voyage, May 1943. [*J. A. Smith*





Eskimo screening the Allied invasion of Sicily at 1300 on 11th July 1943. As destroyer leader, she is not wearing her pennant number. Note also extra 20mm guns amidships and right aft. A dan buoy for marking a swept channel is stowed alongside the after superstructure. In the distance *Carlisle* moves in towards the ammunition-laden *Baarn*, blazing after a bomb hit off Avola. [*IWM*

Left: Nubian lays a smokescreen during the bombardment of Pantelleria on 8th June 1943. [*IWM*

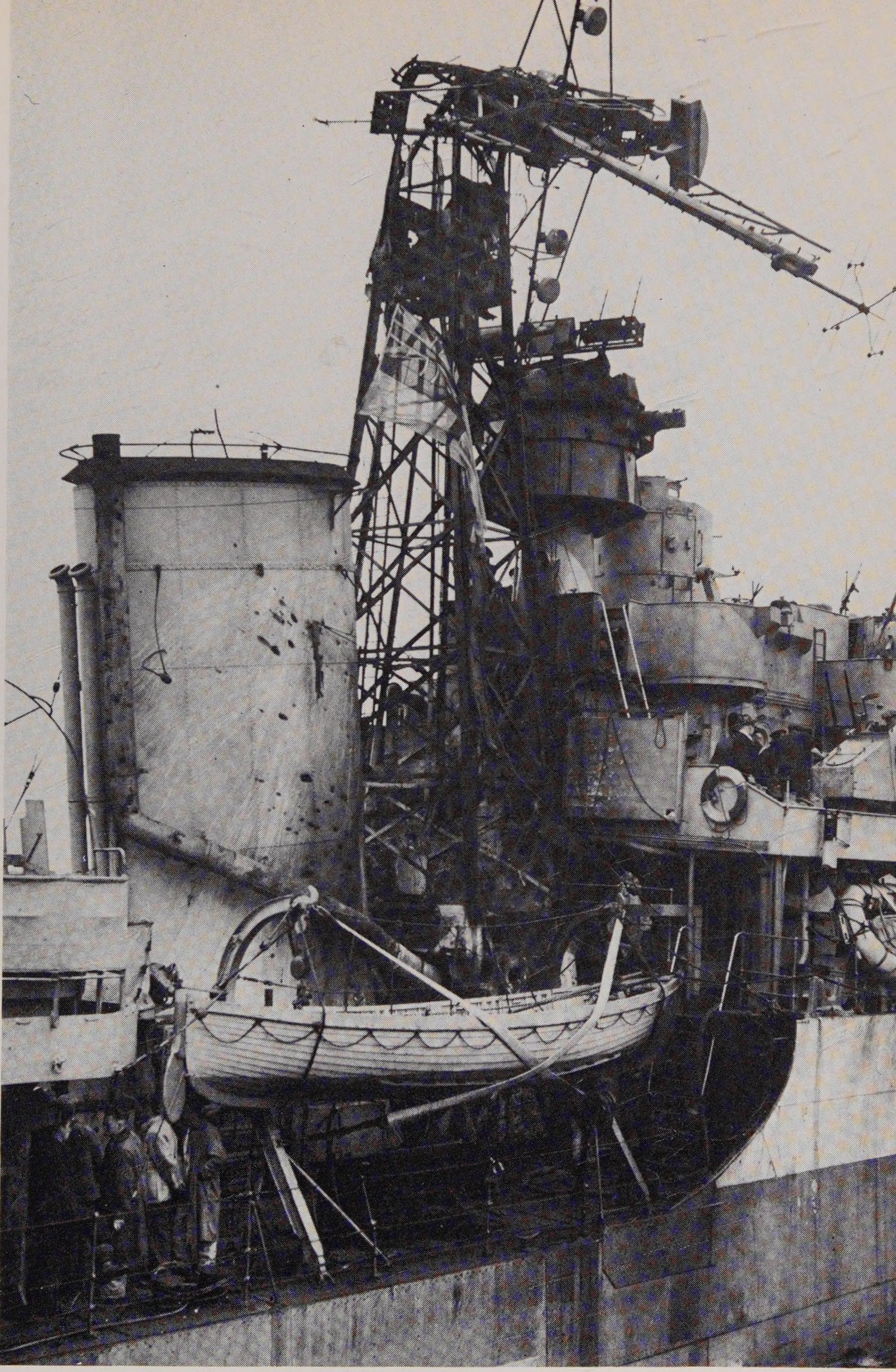
Dauntlesses and Wildcats from *USS Ranger* fly over *Huron* somewhere north of Scapa Flow in September 1943. [*IWM*

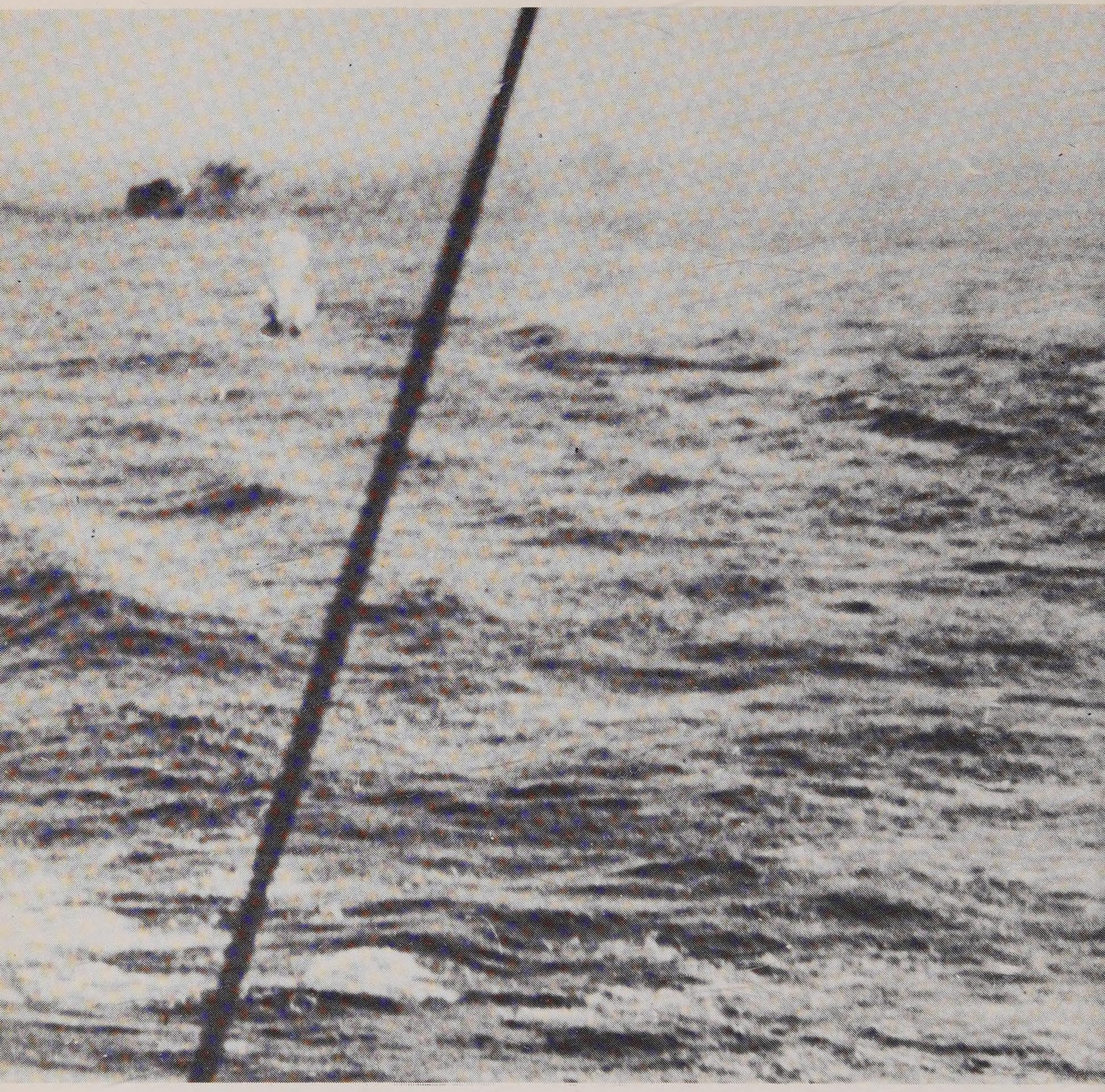
Top left: Five survivors from U-558 waiting to be picked up by *Athabaskan* in the Bay of Biscay on 24th July 1943. [*IWM*

Left: Athabaskan at Scapa Flow in February 1944 – perhaps her last photograph. She now has a lattice foremast. [*IWM*

Haida, *Huron*, *Tartar* and *Black Prince* on patrol in the English Channel in May 1944. All three Tribals are different in appearance. *Huron* lacks HF/DF, while *Tartar* has a lattice foremast and no Type 276 radar. [*DND* (*Canada*)

Right: Tartar returns to Plymouth after the night action of 8/9th June 1944. [*IWM*





Eskimo and *Haida* sink U-971. 1900, 25th June 1944. [*IWM*

Top right: U-971 casualties are brought aboard *Haida*. Note that the SBA is wearing the newly issued RCN lifejacket which saved so many *Athabaskan* lives. [*IWM*

Right: 'Muncher', *Haida*'s rabbit. His paw was trodden on during the excitement of sinking U-971, but after treatment in the sick-bay he returned to duty alongside one of the oerlikons. [*IWM*

Iroquois approaches a beached German trawler, still smouldering after a night engagement off the French coast, August 1944. [*IWM*

Top: Eskimo at Devonport after her collision with *Javelin*, July 1944.
[*K. Newsom Davies – via Rear-Admiral E. N. Sinclair*

to anchor immediately until it cleared. Then a drifting mooring-buoy provided the guns' crews with some target practice as they continued across the Pacific.

Huron relieved *Haida* at Hong Kong on 22nd September and arrived at Sasebo on 1st October. A week's boiler cleaning and minor repairs, and then *Huron* was out patrolling the west coast of Korea.

These patrols were just as monotonous as earlier ones. Commander Pratt tried to send daily parties ashore for recreation, hiking and small arms practice. They painted ship and cleared the condensers of jellyfish and sea grass. They exercised. They searched for LST630, reported missing but later found to be safe. They repaired the main oil fuel suction line from the after tanks. Once *Huron* and *Iroquois* were doing a joint patrol off Pengyong-do and Sochong-do when *Iroquois* took ashore a large bundle of clothes which had been specially purchased in Hong Kong. The grateful villagers gave the landing party four live hens in return.

Huron and *Iroquois* sailed from Sasebo on 26th December. Both Tribals were cleaned, scraped and painted at Hong Kong from 29th December to 15th January 1955. After Singapore they saw *Newcastle* shelling Communist hideouts in the Malayan jungle, but the cruiser did not need any help and the Tribals continued on their way. Off Arabia they found a becalmed dhow "manned by about 20 souls, 34 goats and skippered by an ebony ancient mariner armed with a club". The destroyers gave them water and the last of their Japanese rice. *Huron* and *Iroquois* passed through the Mediterranean and arrived at Halifax on 19th March.

From now on *Huron* was usually in company with one or more of the other Canadian Tribals, but the American, European and Mediterranean exercises and visits of her last ten years seemed dogged by defects and mishaps of all kinds.

In April 1955 both *Huron*'s main shafts were replaced at Halifax. She was dry-docked in the Halifax floating-dock from December to March 1956, the period when her funnel caps were fitted. She was moving into Bedford Basin for compass adjustment after this refit when the starboard main manoeuvring valve gave trouble and she had to be brought back by tugs. Defects frequently developed during the spring exercises in the West Indies and *Huron* had to go back to Halifax for repairs from 3rd to 14th May 1956.

An unidentified submarine contact was investigated off Halifax on 8th June, but nothing came of it. Then on 24th October she damaged her hull when visiting Southampton, so this had to be repaired after she returned to Halifax on 21st November 1956.

The succeeding exercises and cruises were comparatively trouble-free and her next refit began on 1st August 1957. Trials were satisfactory and working-up went ahead at Bermuda. While there on 4th May 1958, she was visited by Princess Soraya of Iran, her mother and her brother. Her next visit to Bermuda later the same month was not so pleasant. She was moving out from Ireland Island Dockyard when her port propeller bore hard against the dockyard wall and then against the destroyer *Troubridge*. *Huron*'s port shaft had to be locked to prevent further damage and she departed for Halifax next morning, beginning repairs on 30th May 1958.

Full-power trials on 16th June were not satisfactory and dockyard officials decided that the port shaft was still out of line so more work had to be done. The next full-power trials on 27th June had to be kept down to 28 knots because of poor visibility and because the asdic dome jammed in the down position. July was taken up with this repair and the resulting trials.

In November 1958 *Huron* was exercising with *Haida* and other NATO ships in the Mediterranean. Gales off southern France interfered with the programme but at 0315 on 15th, all ships weighed anchor and sailed independently from Golfe Juan. *Huron* was one of the last to leave. Because of radio interference from other ships she was not getting good radar reception.

Lowering her asdic dome further reduced her speed and she dropped astern of her position to starboard of the French destroyer *Maillé-Brézé*. *Huron* was ordered back into position and therefore increased speed. *Maillé-Brézé* was now hunting a submarine contact and began to turn first towards *Huron* and then across her bows at 18 knots. *Huron* tried to take avoiding action, but at 0424, at 10-14 knots, she struck *Maillé-Brézé* a glancing blow near the engine room.

Maillé-Brézé's frames were bent inwards for a length of 25 feet along her starboard side and her aluminium structure was damaged as far as ten feet inboard. Piping, machinery, electronics and armament were badly affected, but her seaworthiness was hardly impaired.

Huron's bow had been crumpled as far as No. 10 frame and was displaced 50° to starboard. Her bulkheads were shored up and she tried to get underway stern-first. She soon became uncontrollable and a French tug towed her into Toulon. Four more tugs and occasional assistance from her own engines got her into drydock.

Huron's complement was reduced to a repair and steaming crew, the rest being distributed among the other Canadian ships in the force. All the wreckage was cut away and new plating was constructed, bow drawings again being sent out from Canada. A prefabricated bow was built and lowered into position on 8th December. Repairs were completed on 13th December and the next day *Huron* left for home.

Gales and snow-squalls hit her, especially after she had left the Azores. In the darkness of 22/23rd December loud crashes could be heard and severe vibration could be felt up forward. It seemed as though someone had fixed up a piledriver in the forepeak. *Huron* hove-to, shored up her collision bulkhead and radioed for an escort.

With the coming of dawn they could see what was causing the trouble. The welding on one plate at the waterline had broken loose. When the bow was clear of the water, the plate sprang away from the frames. When the bow dipped under each wave, the weight of water forced the plate back into its proper place.

A T-shaped shore was braced in the forepeak, which helped reduce the vibration a bit, but did not stop the leak very much. A little experiment showed that a speed of 14 knots kept the plates pressed hard against the shores. Later that day air escort arrived, followed by *Saguenay* and then *Buckingham*. They all arrived at Halifax on Christmas Day.

The resulting refit was carried out at St John, New Brunswick, from 12th January to 20th March 1959. After the usual trials and working-up, *Huron* set off in May for an inspection of Sea Cadet units in Newfoundland. Fog and icebergs (one was used for gunnery practice) curtailed part of the visit and the inspection team continued their tour by road and air.

On 27th July, *Huron*, *Iroquois* and *Algonquin* passed through the Gut of Canso and Northumberland Strait to Shediac, where they joined *Ulster* and *Britannia*. Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip embarked in the Royal Yacht on 29th July, and the next day were escorted to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. *Huron* and *Iroquois* fuelled at St John's (Newfoundland) and took up their emergency rescue stations during the Royal flight to the UK.

The autumn saw a self-refit period at Halifax (the previous one had been in June and July), followed by engine repairs and full-power trials. *Huron*'s visit to Newfoundland in late October was bothered by gales, but strong winds caused her more trouble at Bermuda on 25th November. Even a tug could not pull her away from the wall at Ireland Island Dockyard. *Huron* had to sail for a scheduled visit to Boston, so when the wind veered just after midday, a tug hauled her bows round until they were pointing straight at the harbour exit. *Huron* then went directly out to sea.

As her fo'c'sle passed the tug, *Huron*'s bow-party slipped the hawser, but the tug's crew feared that the big Tribal was too close, so they slipped their end as well. *Huron* ran right over the rope and fouled both her propellers. She came to anchor in Grassy Bay and sent down her diver. Helped by divers from other ships, it was cleared in less than an hour and at 1700 she was able to sail at last for Boston.

At the end of December, *Huron*'s forward galley was damaged by fire, and repairs took up most of January 1960. On 18th March, gunnery exercises in the West Indies were interrupted while *Huron*, *Iroquois* and *Nootka* searched unsuccessfully for a USAF plane missing off Bermuda. Then on 9th April, *Huron* left Halifax alone for a refit at Lauzon up the St Lawrence. There was still quite a lot of ice about, some floes were a hundred feet across and two feet thick. *Huron*, with her thin plates, could only edge her way through at 7-8 knots, while heavy merchantmen thumped along at 18 knots.

Completed in the autumn, *Huron* returned to her exercises and visits, and in March 1961 helped *Haida* and *Nootka* search for some Nova Scotia fishermen, missing in icy weather. During *Huron*'s visit to Campbelltown in August, a merchant ship got stuck in the mud in the Restigouche River. On 16th August, *Huron* went downriver fast enough, and close enough, for her wash to unstick the merchantman so that she could get up to Campbelltown under her own steam.

Huron should have had a major refit in the summer of 1962, but it was cancelled during an economy campaign. Her last operation took place on 1st February 1963 when she was stationed in the Western Atlantic during Queen Elizabeth II's and Prince Philip's Transatlantic flight.

On 30th April 1963, *Huron* was paid off at Halifax and prepared for towing to

Sydney, Nova Scotia, to be placed in Operational Reserve. Scheduled for disposal in 1964, *Huron* was bought by Marine Salvage Ltd., and then resold. She arrived at La Spezia in Italy for breaking up on 20th August 1965.

Commanding Officers

Lt/Cdr H. S. Rayner, DSC, RCN 19th July 1943 – 22nd September 1944.
Lt/Cdr H. V. W. Groos, RCN 23rd September 1944 – 24th October 1945.
Lt/Cdr E. T. G. Madgwick, CD, RCN 28th February 1950 – 23rd March 1950.
Lt/Cdr T. C. Pullen, CD, RCN 24th March 1950 – 6th April 1950.
Lt/Cdr E. T. G. Madgwick, CD, RCN 7th April 1950 – 23rd September 1951.
Cdr J. C. Littler, RCN 24th September 1951 – 12th October 1951.
Cdr R. C. Chenoweth, MBE, CD, RCN 18th November 1952 – 20th September 1953.
Cdr T. C. Pullen, CD, RCN 21st September 1953 – 24th June 1954.
Cdr L. P. McCormack, CD, RCN 25th June 1954 – 9th August 1954.
Lt/Cdr E. D. Robbins, CD, RCN 10th August 1954 – 16th August 1954.
Cdr J. C. Pratt, CD, RCN 17th August 1954 – 7th August 1955.
Cdr R. A. Webber, DSC, CD, RCN 8th August 1955 – 27th January 1957.
Cdr N. Cogdon, CD, RCN 28th January 1957 – 1st August 1957.
Cdr W. H. Howe, CD, RCN 28th March 1958 – 6th December 1959.
Cdr H. H. Smith, CD, RCN 7th December 1959 – 25th September 1962.
Cdr D. S. Bethune, RCN 26th September 1962 – 9th April 1963.

Pennant Numbers

G24 June 1943 – December 1949
DDE216 January 1950 – August 1965

HMCS Iroquois

Second of name

Builders: Vickers-Armstrong, High Walker Yard, The Tyne
Engined by: Parsons Marine Steam Turbine Co, Wallsend
Ordered: 5th April 1940
Laid Down: 19th September 1940 (as *Athabaskan*)
Launched: 23rd September 1941 (as *Iroquois* by Mrs Vincent Massey)
Commissioned: 30th November 1942

IROQUOIS DID NOT have a very happy beginning. Shortage of labour and material delayed her completion. When her crew arrived in October 1942, they had to be sent off for courses elsewhere. Her preliminary trials took almost ten days, and her working-up in winter weather off the Orkneys soon showed up weaknesses in her hull plating. Additional strengthening would be needed before her fine hull could cope with all the extra wartime weights. *Iroquois* returned from her first patrol off the Faeroes with broken plating, twisted frames and a bent keel.

By the end of January 1943 *Iroquois* was back on the Tyne for this damage to be repaired, extra stiffening incorporated and counterbalancing weights installed. It was a month before this work and a series of North Sea trials was complete and *Iroquois* sailed independently for Canada.

On arrival at Halifax she was immediately drydocked for a week. Halifax Shipyards had intended to use this examination to learn what they could before completing the Canadian-built Tribals. Instead they had to spend most of the time repairing the damage caused by very heavy weather off the Grand Banks. The drydocking did show that it was vital for stiffening to be built into the ship, and this was done before the Canadian-built Tribals were launched.

Returning from Halifax, *Iroquois* ran into a severe north-westerly gale and two men were washed overboard and lost while trying to rescue an injured shipmate. Fleet exercises and escort in Northern waters continued, until on 24th April, *Iroquois* was again damaged by heavy weather.

By now her crew were getting tired. It seemed as though they had been fighting the North Atlantic for six months and getting nowhere. Even in drydock in Devonport the Fates were against them. A rogue barrage balloon broke away from its moorings during a gale and landed on the ship abaft the after funnel, carrying away the radio aerials.

For most of June, she was employed in the Western Approaches, escorting outward and inward Gibraltar convoys. Then on 9th July, *Iroquois*, *Douglas* and *Moyola* left Plymouth escorting the troopships *Duchess of York*, *California* and *Port Fairy* to Freetown.

On the 11th, they were 300 miles off Vigo. It was a calm, cloudless evening. At 2035 a lone Fw200 appeared, circling the convoy out of range. Half an hour later two more arrived in response to his signals. High-level bombing began.

There was no doubt about their accuracy. Both *California* and *Duchess of York* were hit amidships and were soon burning fiercely. At 2136 the aircraft made for *Port Fairy*, but *Iroquois*' 4in and 2pdr guns drove them off. Three minutes later there was another attack but the bombs fell astern and then the Fw200s flew away.

Moyola and *Douglas* took off survivors from the burning ships, their flames serving as a beacon for U-boats lurking in the gathering darkness. *Iroquois* and *Swale* (who had come from Gibraltar) carried out asdic sweeps and then *Iroquois* closed *Duchess of York* to take off 628 men, including nine Czech officers. Canadian seamen dived overboard to rescue people struggling in the water. At 0135, the two blazing hulks were sunk by the group, and *Port Fairy* was escorted to Casablanca.

The survivors were landed and *Iroquois* embarked one German officer and five ratings from U-506, sunk off Gibraltar by US aircraft. While returning to Plymouth, the German officer's jacket was taken, at his own request, to be laundered. When returned, he complained that one of the badges was missing. There is no doubt that its removal was an infringement of the Geneva Convention and, of course, such unofficial acquisitions greatly hampered the work of Allied Intelligence. Accordingly, all shore leave was stopped until the item was returned. The crew took this hardly, and when ordered to sea on 19th July, all personnel below leading seaman refused duty. This situation was such a shock to the captain that he had a heart attack and had to be taken ashore. The ship had to sail that night and joined *Athabaskan* and *Orkan* in a Biscay patrol.

Returning to Plymouth, *Iroquois* was ordered to join the Home Fleet, but passing through the Irish Sea, she collided with the trawler *Kingston Beryl* on the 28th. She had to be docked at Troon for repairs and so did not arrive at Scapa Flow until 26th August.

For the next few weeks *Iroquois* was engaged in an intensive series of exercises, workups, escorts and patrols around the Orkneys. She once encountered an enemy aircraft, but her next major operation began on 1st October, when she accompanied *Huron* on a run to Murmansk. Returning ten days later, *Iroquois* was out again on the 14th, covering with *Haida*, a double Arctic movement. This lasted until the 22nd and on the 27th, *Iroquois* went to the Clyde to collect *Tyne*. They both arrived at Scapa on the 30th and *Iroquois* immediately began a boiler clean alongside the depot ship.

Iroquois had a very full time until February 1944. *Haida*, *Huron* and *Iroquois* escorted JW54A and RA54B to and from Kola, a relief convoy to Spitsbergen and another out-and-home Russian convoy. *Iroquois* then moved to Plymouth where the 10th DF was preparing for the Normandy invasion, but she returned briefly to Scapa with *Athabaskan* and *Haida* for Operation Posthorn.

Iroquois left Plymouth alone on 18th February. 250 miles off the French coast, an alert asdic operator heard torpedoes approaching on the starboard bow and the

destroyer combed the tracks of what were believed to be gnats (acoustic torpedoes).

On 26th February, *Iroquois* arrived at Halifax. She left again after a refit on 1st June and a week later had arrived at Liverpool for harbour training, while new radar was fitted to her new lattice foremast. By 5th August, *Iroquois* was at sea with *Ashanti* and other ships of the 10th DF. The force carried out a successful sweep off Belle Ile and was returning to Plymouth next morning when *Iroquois* was detached to reinforce anti-submarine groups.

These frigates were spread out in line abreast steaming through a likely U-boat area. The nearest *Iroquois* came to getting a U-boat was at 1611. *Loch Killin*, the next in line, carried out a brief attack on U-736, one of the first U-boats to be sunk with the newly-developed squid.

Only three ships took part in the next Kinetic patrol, but they achieved considerable success. *Mauritius*, *Iroquois* and *Ursa* left Plymouth on 14th August to spend the night patrolling off Les Sables. At 0305 starshell revealed two armed merchantmen and an Elbing torpedo-boat. The British fired at, and hit, the armed merchant vessels. They were set on fire but tried to hide in the Elbing's smokescreen. The torpedo-boat fired all her torpedoes, all of which passed ahead of *Iroquois*. The Tribal got one hit on T24 but no torpedo hits, but the Elbing was probably also damaged by *Mauritius* and *Ursa*.

At 0335, they resumed their patrol, undamaged by share batteries which had also joined in. An hour later they hit a small coastal tanker which ran aground ablaze. Then at 0620, they found a small group of ships off Ile d'Yeu. It was too shallow for *Mauritius*, so *Iroquois* and *Ursa* went in to get them.

Their targets were believed to be two merchant ships and two minesweepers. Any return fire was quickly silenced. The ships were set on fire and ran aground. Next day *Mauritius*, *Iroquois* and *Ursa* returned to Plymouth.

The very nature of these fast moving and confused inshore battles, precluded precise identification of targets and evaluation of results. As soon as enemy vessels were sighted, they were engaged. They might be M-class minesweepers serving as escort vessels, coastal tankers fitted as flakships, blockade-running merchantmen armed as auxiliary cruisers and doubling as sperrbrecher, or captured French seaplane-tenders employed as gunboats. And of course there were trawlers and drifters from all over North-West Europe serving as minesweepers, subchasers, tugs, ferryboats, flakships, and radar pickets.

Sometimes grounded ships would be refloated and the damaged ones repaired. They would be got into drydock and be scuttled there, or surrendered when the Allied Armies overran the port. Others got farther round the coast only to hit a mine, be strafed by aircraft or run into another raiding party of destroyers. Even postwar study of German documents did not add a great deal to Allied knowledge about these actions. At this particular period, the correct recording of shipping movements was not accorded a very high priority by the German Navy.

So, having left Plymouth again on 20th August, *Mauritius*, *Iroquois* and *Ursa* spent the next day trying to confirm the results of their previous actions. On the 22nd,

Iroquois and *Mauritius* were straddled by a Gironde coastal battery, but that night they were back in the north, in Audierne Bay.

At 0117, *Iroquois* got a radar contact. They stood out to sea and let the enemy get well into the bay. At 0209 *Iroquois* led *Ursa* and *Mauritius* in. They opened fire at 4,000 yards at four enemy vessels which turned end on and made smoke. The Germans also opened fire and were joined by a shore battery, but all their gunnery was inaccurate. *Mauritius* hit and blew up a medium-sized merchantman, while *Iroquois* and *Ursa* dealt with the others. A trawler and a merchant ship caught fire, one running aground and the other sinking. A minesweeper was damaged and she too ran aground. At 0249 the British ships turned away, leaving 150 survivors to be rounded up by the FFI on Pointe de Penmarch.

At 0351 the deadly trio repeated their performance and an hour later another four enemy ships had been eliminated. Two had sunk, while the others had caught fire and collided, one capsizing and sinking, and the last running aground. *Ursa* then returned and boarded the minesweeper aground off Audierne, removing eleven prisoners plus charts and documents.

Probably the exact results of these two nights' work will never be known, but between them *Mauritius*, *Iroquois* and *Ursa* had sunk M385 (a 543-ton minesweeper) and the trawlers V702 (the 444-ton *Memel*), V717 (the 1,000-ton *Alfred III*), V720, V729 (the 282-ton *Marie Simone*) and V730 (the 535-ton *Michel François*), they had wrecked the 1,375-ton seaplane-tender *Richthofen* and damaged T24 (an Elbing-class torpedo-boat).

Iroquois' damage amounted to some splinter holes and some guard rails bent by the blast from her own guns, which were scorched and blistered.

By 26th August, *Mauritius*, *Iroquois* and *Ursa* were again patrolling their usual beat, but this time trying to make contact with the local FFI. Covered by the other two, *Iroquois* went close inshore, and in the afternoon met a small boat off Ile d'Yeu. The young girl in it proved to be the local schoolteacher at Port Joinville and she reported that the Germans had left the previous day. They had wrecked the post office, radar installations and lighthouse, and had taken the mayor and nineteen citizens with them.

Iroquois sent a small party ashore with signalling equipment, flour, milk, sugar, chocolate and cigarettes. They stepped ashore to a great welcome and much rejoicing, and then set up a signal station in a disused tower outside the town. They thus kept in touch with *Iroquois* while she continued her patrol.

Next morning there was a procession to the graves of Allied airmen and then more speeches. The shore party returned to *Iroquois* with plenty of details about enemy movements and the positions of shore batteries and coastal minefields. They were loaded with flowers and an enormous iced cake. That night there was a similar landing at St Guénole.

On the 30th, *Iroquois* helped *Haida* escort *Jeanne D'Arc* into Cherbourg. 5th September saw *Iroquois* joining the escort of the liner *Queen Mary*, when she took Mr Churchill to the Second Quebec Conference. *Iroquois* turned back at the Azores

for a boiler clean at Plymouth and then returned to her Biscay patrols. Twice, on 23rd and 30th September, she landed armed parties at Les Sables.

From 16th October, *Iroquois* spent some time with the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow, but returned to Plymouth on 6th November. Throughout the winter of 1944/45, she remained on escort duty with capital ships and troopships in British coastal waters where snorkel-fitted U-boats were operating with some success. On 16th March, however, *Iroquois* left Plymouth for Scapa Flow, and for the rest of the month joined *Haida* in screening carrier strikes on Norwegian targets.

Due to the success of these daylight raids, the Germans reverted to running coastal convoys at night. So *Onslow*, *Iroquois*, *Zealous* and *Zest* left Scapa Flow on the evening of 3rd April. At 0011 they intercepted four medium-sized merchant ships and three escorts off Jossingfiord.

The destroyers got between the convoy and the coast and attacked from shorewards. Apparently assuming they were under aerial attack, all the enemy vessels began firing into the air. Within ten minutes *Onslow* reported possible torpedo hits on two merchantmen. All the other ships had been hit by gunfire, and an escort and one merchant ship were burning. The German forces ashore switched on their search-lights to see what was happening, but only succeeded in illuminating two E-boats. They had not been noticed before and had not made any attempt to interfere, but E-boats were always dangerous and the British destroyers withdrew, apparently having severely handled the convoy. It was therefore disappointing to learn later that no enemy ships had been sunk and none seriously damaged.

Haida, *Huron* and *Iroquois* next escorted JW66 to Kola, returning with RA66. They all celebrated VE-Day at Scapa Flow and then shared in the liberation of Scandinavia, *Iroquois* going to Oslo, Copenhagen and Kiel. The three Tribals then returned to Halifax to prepare for the Pacific, but their tropicalisation refits were suspended and they went into reserve.

For a while *Iroquois* acted as flagship and depot ship of the Reserve Ships. Officers and ratings were accommodated in her to administer and maintain the various vessels in reserve.

A refit, begun towards the end of 1947, was completed on 24th June 1949 and *Iroquois* commissioned as a cadet training ship. Besides visits and cruises around the Maritime Provinces and New England, *Iroquois* also found time to stand by the Panamanian freighter *Eugenia* in difficulties in an August gale off Halifax.

Then on 30th September 1949, *Iroquois* again went into reserve. She began con-version on 15th June 1950 and was completed as an escort destroyer on 21st October 1951. Her anti-submarine armament comprised two triple-barrelled squid and her guns included four 4in forward and two 3in/50 aft. A lightweight lattice foremast was installed and there were other alterations. Her standard displacement went up to 2,200 tons.

Besides the normal post-refit trials *Iroquois* had to go to Norfolk, Virginia, for 3in/50 gunnery tests as these weapons were of US design. *Iroquois* returned to Halifax for a pre-Korea refit on 15th March 1952. Various minor hull repairs were carried

out, and her bottom was scraped and painted. Storing and ammunitioning took several days, trials were completed, and *Iroquois* sailed from Halifax on 21st April. She went out via the Panama Canal and arrived at Sasebo on 12th June.

Iroquois started off by screening carriers off the west coast from 24th to 30th June, almost an obligatory assignment for newcomers to Korean waters. Most of July was spent in carrier screening by day with night patrols off Pengyong-do and Chodo. *Iroquois* was often in company with *Belfast* and joined *Ceylon* and *Amethyst* in shelling the southern tip of the Ongjin Peninsula. The bombardment was controlled from the air and hit coastal defences on the approaches to Haeju, as well as enemy troops digging in behind the coast. Return gunfire was silenced.

Not all enemy artillery gave up so easily. *Belfast* was hit by a shell when she and *Iroquois* were bombarding near Chodo on 5th August. Carrier escort, exercises and maintenance at Kure followed until the end of August, when *Iroquois* began the Haeju-man patrol. Apart from a bombardment of Mu-do and a trip out to sea to find room to avoid typhoon Mary, the patrol was uneventful.

On the evening of 9th September, however, *Belfast* arrived to join Operation Siciro. 350 guerrillas from Yongmae-do were going to raid the Chongdong Peninsula, making the assault in motor and sailing junks. The civilian junk crews were encouraged to remain at their posts by an armed guerrilla who stood beside each coxswain.

That night *Iroquois* and *Belfast* shelled the peninsula while the Wolfpacks (as the guerrillas were called) moved across three miles of water and mudflats. At dawn *Sicily*'s aircraft (hence Sic-iro) arrived and helped to cover the withdrawal. By 0830 the raiders were on their way back to Yongmae-do. They had suffered four slight casualties, but had claimed 400 enemy casualties. They had also destroyed several gun positions and captured three enemy agents.

Iroquois remained off the west coast until the 29th when she relieved *Charity* off Yang-do at a safe anchorage, undisturbed by Communist artillery for fifteen months. Within fifteen minutes of her arrival, *Iroquois* came under fire, one shell landing 400 yards away. Worse was to come.

On 2nd October, *Iroquois* and *Marsh* were finishing off a train wrecked earlier by *Charity* near Songjin. The repair work had been successfully disabled and the two warships were withdrawing when *Iroquois* was straddled by shore batteries. Two shells nearmissed and a third hit on 'B' mounting. Three men were killed or mortally wounded, two were severely injured and eight others slightly wounded by splinters. *Iroquois* zigzagged away with shells falling around her, but no more hit, and her combat efficiency was unimpaired. Next day *Iroquois* replenished from *USS Chemung* and transferred her dead and wounded to her.

Iroquois remained on duty on the east coast until the 14th, when she was drydocked at Sasebo. More patrols, a visit to Hong Kong, minor repairs after typhoon Bess, a last bombardment off Chodo – and then her tour was over. *Iroquois* left Sasebo on 26th November, going home via Pearl Harbor, Esquimalt and the Panama Canal. She arrived at Halifax for refit on 8th January 1953.

Huron and *Iroquois* returned to Sasebo together in June. Patrols off the west coast were quiet as fog and rain prevented bombardments. Perhaps the most alarming experience was finding fish eyes in the soup at an official Tokyo dinner.

Patrols and carrier screening continued on the west coast even after the Korean War officially ended on 27th July 1953. On 31st July *Iroquois* helped *Tyne* and *Birmingham* evacuate Chodo, which was to be handed over to the Communists. Various items of equipment were removed and other installations blown up. Two elderly people decided to leave the island, but another ten elected to stay, so six weeks' provisions were left with them. Other west coast islands were evacuated by the UN during the following week, and from then on, the warships often anchored in one spot for almost the whole of their armistice patrols.

Iroquois began her homeward voyage via the Mediterranean on New Year's Day 1954, arriving back at Halifax on 10th February, having circumnavigated the globe.

After a refit and a visit to Newfoundland with senior Army officers, *Iroquois* set out again for Korea on 1st July. At Pearl Harbor she met *USCGC Iroquois* and arrived at Sasebo on 22nd August.

Five days later she rescued a lone Korean fisherman off Pengyong-do. His boat had foundered the previous day and seven others had been drowned, but he had clung to a piece of wreckage. He was treated in the sick bay and a whip-round raised $52 for him when he left the ship at Yongpyong-do. During the autumn of 1954, *Iroquois* was roughly visited by June, Kathie, Lorna, Marie, Pamela and Ruby – a whole procession of typhoons. *Iroquois* was often in company with *Huron* and the two destroyers went home together, arriving at Halifax on 19th March 1955.

In May, *Iroquois* assisted *Nootka* after she had run into the breakwater at Bermuda, but in July *Iroquois* had troubles of her own. She and *Huron* were at Argentia during a cruise around the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland. Suddenly two fire-row tubes blew out, caused a flash-back and started a fire in No. 2 boiler room. It was soon extinguished, but one boiler was still out of action the next month, so *Iroquois* could not participate in the planned exercises. In any case most of her crew was new to the ship and needed more training. So on 19th August, *Iroquois* went to Bermuda.

Thick fog was followed by a violent electrical storm, with large balls of St Elmo's fire appearing at the tips of the whip aerials. It was followed by a gale which lasted twenty-four hours.

By 1637 on the 21st, the wind had started to die down, although the seas were still very confused. *Iroquois* had just come to the end of a 15° roll to starboard when a gigantic wave climbed up and broke over the starboard side. It smacked *Iroquois* straight over to a 40° list to port. The captain's chair was broken and he was thrown onto the starboard compass repeater. The whaler's davits were sheered off – their remains and odd bits of the whaler being jammed up against the torpedo-tubes. No. 1 cutter on the starboard side was stove in and the griping pads forced through the port side of the boat. The loading platform on the starboard No. 1 bofors was bent and the cartwheel sight crumpled. There was plenty of other minor damage and *Iroquois* had to return to Halifax for repairs.

She was tidied up enough to take part in Western Atlantic exercises and in October 1955 began a major refit at Halifax. Her funnels were removed and caps added when they were replaced. Sea trials in February 1956 showed up defects in the new electronic gear. Returning to the dockyard for these to be rectified, *Iroquois* ran into an 80-knot storm. It weakened the hull and split the front panel of the new asdic dome in four places.

By March 1956, these repairs had been completed and *Iroquois* joined the other Canadian Tribals. In May, *Haida*, *Iroquois* and *Algonquin* began a cruise in the Gulf of St Lawrence. It included a visit to Montreal (where a local cruise was marred by millions of shadflies) and to Trois-Rivières. One speech contained the wry comment that "the last time the Iroquois visited Trois-Rivières, two hundred people were killed".

In her last years, *Iroquois* visited ports in America and Europe. She escorted the Royal Yacht *Britannia* and shared in NATO exercises of all kinds as well as air-sea rescue searches. A full-power trial on 24th October 1958, after a year-long refit, showed that she could still do 28 knots in fairly rough weather. But by the end of the year, her shafts and propellers were giving so much trouble that they had to be replaced.

Further service followed, but on 24th October 1962, *Iroquois* was paid off at Halifax and went into Operational Reserve. After being towed to Sydney, she was scheduled for disposal and in 1966 was scrapped at Bilbao in Spain.

Commanding Officers

Cdr W. B. L. Holms, RCN 30th November 1942 – 29th July 1943.
Cdr J. C. Hibbard, DSC, RCN 30th July 1943 – 7th February 1945.
Cdr K. F. Adams, RCN 8th February 1945 – 2nd July 1945.
Cdr E. W. Finch-Noyes, RCN 3rd July 1945 – 10th November 1945.
Lt-Cdr J. Plomer, DSC, RCN 1st March 1947 – 1st June 1947.
Lt-Cdr J. S. Davis, RCN 2nd June 1947 – 13th November 1947.
Lt-Cdr B. P. Young, MBE, RCN 14th November 1947 – 2nd May 1949.
Lt-Cdr T. C. Pullen, RCN 24th June 1949 – 30th September 1949.
Cdr W. M. Landymore, CD, RCN 21st October 1951 – 31st October 1953.
Lt-Cdr S. G. Moore, CD, RCN 1st November 1953 – 22nd March 1954.
Cdr M. F. Oliver, CD, RCN 23rd March 1954 – 7th August 1955.
Cdr D. L. Hanington, DSC, CD, RCN 8th August 1955 – 23rd May 1957.
Lt-Cdr M. W. Mayo, RCN 24th May 1957 – 19th November 1957.
Cdr W. D. F. Johnston, CD, RCN 19th October 1958 – 7th September 1960.
Cdr H. W. Moxley, RCN 8th September 1960 – 27th November 1960.
Lt-Cdr W. D. Munro, RCN 28th November 1960 – 24th October 1962.

Pennant Numbers

G89 October 1942 – August 1951
DDE217 September 1951 – 1966

HMS Maori

Second of name

Builders: Fairfield Shipbuilding Co, Govan
Engined by: Fairfield Shipbuilding Co, Govan
Ordered: 10th March 1936
Laid Down: 6th July 1936
Launched: 2nd September 1937 (by Mrs W. J. Jordan)
Commissioned: 5th December 1938

MAORI WAS perhaps the last Mediterranean Tribal to go to war. She had joined *Cossack*'s division in January 1939, accompanying the other ships in all their visits and exercises. Thanks perhaps to the benevolence of the two tiki, or Maori totem poles, adorning her quarter deck, she had also achieved some social fame. Armed with the appropriate instructions from New Zealand, her ship's company had performed a Maori War Dance at the Queen's Hall in Sliema. Her harmonica band was renowned throughout the fleet, but her Rugger XV could have done with some good fortune when they played the French Navy at Toulon – they lost 40 points to nil. *Maori* had also acquired her own private bum-boat. This little fishing-craft had been picked up at sea off Gibraltar. It was empty, bloodstains and bullet holes telling of some small Civil War tragedy. However, it had been hoisted inboard and when renovated, had become the envy of the rest of the flotilla and the object of raiding parties from their chummy-ship *Cossack*.

On 3rd September, *Maori* was lying with the rest of the division at Alexandria. Her whaler had been taken off for a solitary picnic at the end of the bay and was being sailed back in the afternoon. One of *Maori*'s motor-boats found and towed the whaler back, both were hoisted inboard and the destroyer sailed. Commander Brewer pointed out, in the nicest possible terms, to the lone yachtsman, that he had held up the war because he needed the whaler, not its errant occupant.

Cossack, *Maori*, *Zulu* and *Nubian* were engaged in convoy escort duties and contraband control, returning to UK in October. Again convoy escort occupied much of their time, but *Maori* also carried out a number of North Sea patrols, much colder than the warm Mediterranean they had just left.

On 30th November, *Inglefield* and *Maori* were on one of these patrols when they were ordered to help the submarine *Triad*, in difficulties in the Skagerrak. A gale was blowing, but *Maori* got a wire on board and towed the submarine to shelter in a fiord near Stavanger. Norway being neutral, the warships had to leave within the statutory period. *Triad* had managed to repair her hydroplanes, but the two destroyers stayed with her until they were relieved by a tug who went on with the submarine to the Tyne.

Maori was always on North Sea patrols – or so it seemed to her crew. They even

celebrated Christmas Day on patrol, with corned beef and biscuits. Perhaps it was therefore appropriate that she should have accompanied *Cossack* during the sweep that led to the release of the *Altmark* prisoners in February 1940.

Maori was refitted and degaussed at Fairfield's Yard in March 1940. This defence against magnetic mines was not the only gadget she carried in 1940. At various times she was fitted with a sort of bomb on a kite and with a Holman projector. Anti-aircraft weapons were in very short supply, and anything that would hit back at enemy aircraft was always welcome on North Sea patrols.

When the Norwegian Campaign began, *Maori* spent some time screening the big ships in the North Sea, but on 19/20th April, she escorted French troopships into Namsos. She spent the night ferrying Chasseurs Alpins ashore, and then left before dawn. She was back again on the 25/26th, with the merchant ship *Blackheath*, full of trucks, petrol and provisions. The Army was busy enough fighting the Germans, and had no soldiers to spare for rapid unloading. So *Maori* and *Fortune* took *Blackheath* back out to sea, screened her during the hours of daylight and took her in again. This time she was unloaded, but there was still a shortage of drivers. Four seamen therefore volunteered to drive the four trucks up the road and thus supply the front line, now only a few miles away.

Maori arrived back at Scapa Flow in time to join *Afridi* in escorting the evacuation convoy to Namsos. Dense fog forced them all to turn back, except *Maori* who found the entrance and was joined by other ships. They reached Namsos at dawn, but were immediately bombed, so they turned back into the mist-shrouded fiord to shelter from the bombers. Unfortunately, *Maori*'s masthead stuck up above the fog and she was singled out by the divebombers.

Two bombs in particular, both fitted with screamers, burst close alongside, one to port abreast the bridge, and the other to starboard near the torpedo-tubes. Both motor-boats and the whaler were blown to pieces, and the hull, funnels and superstructure pierced by splinters. About twenty men were injured, five dying of their wounds.

That night Namsos was evacuated, although *Bison* and *Afridi* were sunk during the subsequent withdrawal. *Maori*'s casualties were landed in Scotland, while her own damage was patched up at Scapa Flow. Adequate repairs were carried out at Bootle and she was soon back at Scapa Flow, joining *Ashanti* and the other Tribals in covering the final withdrawal from Norway.

On 5th June, she left Scapa Flow in a force bound for Iceland, to intercept German warships reported there. Some sources even suggested that German troops had got ashore at Seidisfiord and *Maori* was one of the destroyers ordered to find out. They eased into the narrow fiord, prepared for ambush by shore batteries or lurking destroyers, to find a party of British troops in undisturbed possession of the place. It had been a false alarm.

In March, Sweden had acquired four warships from Italy. Two were destroyers; *Puke* (ex-*Giovanni Nicotera*) and *Psilander* (ex-*Bettino Ricasoli*), built in 1927 and 1926 respectively. Displacing 935 tons, they were armed with four 4.7in, two 40mm guns,

and four torpedo-tubes. The other two were torpedo-boats, *Romulus* (ex-*Spica*) and *Remus* (ex-*Astore*) both built in 1935. They displaced 638 tons and carried three 3.9in, six 37mm and two 13mm guns, and four tubes. They had set out from Italy accompanied by an oiler and their depot ship (the old liner *Patricia*) but storms and engine room defects had forced them to put into Skaalefiord.

Dunkirk was over. France had collapsed. Italy had entered the war. Every British warship would soon be needed to repel the invasion which must surely come. War-ships belonging to occupied countries must either sail with the RN or be disabled lest they fall into German hands and be used against Britain. So the British Govern-ment considered four destroyer-type vessels, built in Italy and destined for a neutral country within Germany's sphere of influence. It was decided to invoke the "Right of Angary", an ancient international law which declared that it was "a belligerent right, arising out of necessity, to dispose over, use, and destroy, if need be, property belonging to neutral states". The belligerent has to pay for damage or loss and there are precedents for such action. *Tartar*, *Maori* and *Mashona* were therefore sent to the Faeroes to requisition the Swedish ships on 20th June.

The Swedes naturally refused to hand over their ships and were quite prepared to begin a battle punctually at whatever time any ultimatum expired. However, their ships were not in a fit condition for sea, let alone a fight, and they were literally over-shadowed by the big Tribals. Accordingly the Swedes handed over their ships and were accommodated in *Patricia* which was permitted to sail on to Sweden.

A care and maintenance party was left with *Psilander* and *Romulus*, while passage crews were put aboard *Puke* and *Remus*. By the morning of 21st June, these two had been able to raise steam and were heading for Scapa Flow, escorted by *Tartar*. *Puke* developed so many defects, that she was soon far astern and eventually broke down altogether. She was taken in tow by the trawler *Kingston Peridot*. The tug *Saucy* tried to get a line aboard, crashing into *Puke* in the attempt.

By 22nd June, there was hardly any food or water aboard *Puke*, she was rolling 45° and seemed likely to capsize at any minute. The situation was relieved first by the appearance of *Maori*, who dumped oil to lessen the waves, and then by the powerful tug *Buccaneer*, who finally towed *Puke* into Scapa Flow. During the next fortnight, *Psilander*, *Romulus*, *Patricia* and the oiler, also came to Scapa Flow.

Understandably, the Swedish Government reacted fiercely to this affair and discreet diplomatic argument raged furiously behind the scenes. Meanwhile the newly-acquired destroyers had been thoroughly inspected and found to be so full of defects that they would need a certain amount of repair before they could even sail to a proper dockyard. They would then need an extensive refit, that would be even more protracted by the lack of proper spares, tools and drawings. The invasion would be over (and defeated) before all this had been done.

The Government therefore decided that the four Swedish ships should be returned to their crews. Presently, the worst of their defects remedied, they set sail again, being bombed – without damage – off Norway by a suspicious RAF aircraft.

Maori shared in the Home Fleet's patrols and sweeps, and prepared for the expected

invasion. But she also had occasion to strike back at the enemy. On 13/14th October, *Cossack*, *Ashanti*, *Sikh* and *Maori* struck at an enemy convoy off the Norwegian coast. Two nights later *Maori* followed *Fame* and *Ashanti* when they ran aground off Whitburn. *Maori*, however, was fortunate. She got off minus her asdic dome.

After this had been repaired, *Maori* spent much of the winter escorting capital ships covering minelayers off Iceland. By December 1940, she was undergoing a major refit at Hebburn on the Tyne. Apart from routine repairs 'X' mounting was now replaced by a twin 4in AA.

When completed in January 1941, *Maori* joined *Cossack*, *Sikh* and *Zulu* in convoy escort duty in the Western Approaches. While engaged on this work, the destroyers took part in the *Bismarck* action, *Maori* picking up some of the survivors.

Maori spent some time in the Channel to defend coastal convoys against enemy light forces. Two single 2pdr guns were installed to augment her fire power against these fast moving targets. She paid a visit to Londonderry and Type 286M radar was fitted.

In July, *Cossack*, *Maori* and *Sikh* took part in the Substance convoy to Malta and on 30/31st July, *Cossack* and *Maori* bombarded Alghero in Sardinia. By the end of August, *Maori* was back in the UK undergoing refit and repairs in London. Her after funnel was cut down, the mainmast removed, and a number of other modifications carried out, being completed on 11th October.

Towards the end of 1941, the Admiralty decided to reinforce the 14th DF in the Eastern Mediterranean. So it came about that on 13th December, *Sikh*, *Legion*, *Maori* and *Isaac Sweers* were steaming eastwards through the Mediterranean. Meanwhile information had been received at Malta, that the Italian cruisers *Alberico Da Barbiano* and *Alberto Di Guissano* were loading cased petrol at Palermo. They sailed at dusk for Tripoli proceeding via the Sicilian Narrows and Cape Bon. Both cruisers displaced 5,200 tons and were armed with eight 6in, six 3.9in, eight 37mm and eight 13.2mm guns, and four torpedo-tubes. They were accompanied by the torpedo boat *Cigno*, displacing 789 tons and carrying three 3.9in guns, torpedo-tubes and a number of automatic weapons.

Torpedo-bombers and Force K (the Malta striking force of cruisers and destroyers) were ordered to intercept them, while *Sikh*, *Legion*, *Maori* and *Isaac Sweers* acted as longstop in case the Italian cruisers should turn back. In the event Force K's sortie was cancelled and Commander Stokes' destroyers arrived just too late. The Italian cruisers were disappearing around Cape Bon.

Continuing on course beyond Cape Bon, the Allied destroyers suddenly found the Italians coming back towards them. The torpedo-bomber attack at midnight had not damaged the cruisers, but they knew now that they could not reach Tripoli unmolested. Expecting a much heavier air attack at daylight, they were trying to get back to Palermo before dawn.

Commander Stokes let them approach so that he could get between the shore and the Italians. The destroyers were thus hidden against the land and also prevented the enemy from seeking shelter in the shallow waters. They struck at 0225.

Three torpedoes hit *Alberico Da Barbiano* and she sank immediately, a mass of flames. Only one torpedo hit *Alberto Di Guissano*, but bursting cans of fuel spread flaming petrol across her decks and through her compartments. An hour later she had sunk. A few Italian shells landed on the African shore and all *Cigno*, herself damaged, could do, was pick up survivors. Within several minutes the four Allied destroyers had won a spectacular victory; in one stroke, destroying two powerful enemy warships and robbing the enemy of a large quantity of vital fuel. It was a well deserved welcome the destroyers received as they steamed into Grand Harbour later that day.

After unloading mail, *Sikh* and *Maori* went on into the Eastern Mediterranean and joined Rear-Admiral Vian who was escorting the fast fleet supply ship *Breconshire* to Malta. She had a speed of 18 knots and was almost a permanent member of every Malta convoy at this time. Air attacks had developed during 17th December and in the evening Italian battleships, cruisers and destroyers appeared. This powerful force was also covering a convoy, the main concern of both sides during the 1st Battle of Sirte. After an inconclusive action in the gathering darkness, the British destroyers were recalled and *Breconshire* went on with Force 'K' to Malta. Rear-Admiral Vian's force returned to Alexandria after an uneventful night's sweep.

The night they arrived, 18/19th December, the battleships *Queen Elizabeth* and *Valiant* were disabled and virtually sunk by Italian human torpedoes. The same night Force 'K' was decimated in a minefield off Tripoli. It was therefore decided that *Sikh*, *Maori* and *Zulu* should be based at Malta for the time being as the 22nd DF. They would act as a surface striking force and would provide additional escorts at the Malta end of convoys to and from the island.

Usually ships escorted from Malta were empty, although on one of the trips, *Breconshire* took out a large number of civilian internees. A day out of Malta the escorts exchanged convoys with the Alexandria-based ships and returned with full merchantmen to Malta. By now the British Army in North Africa had occupied the Libyan airfields which ensured the comparative safety of these convoys from air attack.

Meanwhile the Axis Armies were also building up their forces for a counter-attack in the desert, and the destroyers were employed in attempts to cut the enemy supply routes. On one such sortie on 7/8th February 1942, *Zulu* and *Lively* were ordered to intercept two large supply ships, sighted by air reconnaissance south-west of Malta.

The destroyers located the enemy vessels, which turned out to be the auxiliary schooner *Aosta* (494 tons) and the 316-ton trawler *Grongo*. They were some miles apart and both were apparently carrying ammunition or petrol as they blew up as soon as they were hit. Although successful, Commander Graham of *Zulu* felt that it was rather a waste to send two big destroyers out on a special mission to deal with such small craft.

In spite of this success, Rommel's forces were being more quickly reinforced than the British. By early February, the Libyan airfields were again in Axis hands, so that the Eastern Mediterranean convoys again became extremely hazardous. At the

same time, the Germans opened a massive air offensive against Malta to neutralise the island. It reached a climax later in the spring, but even in February, air raids seemed continuous, especially over the harbour areas which were always singled out for special attention. Off-duty personnel customarily slept ashore in shelters, leaving only a few people on board each ship. Submarines often spent the whole day submerged while in harbour.

So only one man was killed at 0200 on 12th February when a bomb exploded in *Maori*'s engine and gearing rooms. She blew up and sank, still moored at the emergency destroyer buoy at the entrance to Dockyard Creek. Boats' crews from other ships helped in the rescue work as blazing fuel oil spread across the water, and finally went out.

Maori's forepart still showed above water at daybreak and the wreck seriously interfered with shipping movements. At the same time, her 'A' and 'B' mountings still looked in working order, and it was suggested that these guns be mounted on Ricassoli Breakwater for the Army's use. Bombs still fell on and around *Maori* during the succeeding raids.

By the end of the year, therefore, it was decided that her wreck should be lifted, moved out of Grand Harbour, and set down off Sliema. On 5th July 1945, *Maori*'s hulk was again raised and was finally scuttled in deep water much farther out.

Commanding Officers

Cdr G. N. Brewer, RN 15th October 1938 – 29th May 1940.
Cdr H. T. Armstrong, RN 30th May 1940 – 9th July 1941.
Cdr R. E. Courage, DSO, DSC, RN 10th July 1941 – 12th February 1942.

Pennant Numbers

L24 October 1938 – December 1938
F24 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G24 Autumn 1940 – February 1942

HMS Mashona

First of name

Builders: Parsons Marine Steam Turbine Co (Hull sub-contracted to Vickers-Armstrong, High Walker Yard, The Tyne)
Engined by: Parsons Marine Steam Turbine Co, Wallsend
Ordered: June 1936
Laid Down: 5th August 1936
Launched: 3rd September 1937 (by Lady Meade-Featherstonehaugh)
Commissioned: 1st March 1939

MASHONA'S SHORT LIFE was full of activity. She began by escorting the liner *Empress of Australia* down-Channel in May 1939 with King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on board. After a month's exercises she was then involved in the *Thetis* disaster. More exercises with the 6th DF and the Home Fleet occupied her until the beginning of the War.

Now came the time of patrols and escorts, often in very rough weather. She also took part in a number of anti-submarine hunts, although the first two U-boats sunk in the war, U-39 and U-27, both fell to F-class destroyers. However, *Mashona's* first major wartime operation was concerned, not with the destruction, but with the rescue, of a submarine.

In September, the submarine *Spearfish* was severely damaged by enemy action while operating in the German Bight. She was unable to submerge and crept along the surface close to neutral waters off the Danish coast. She radioed for help, and *Somali*, *Mashona* and *Matabele* were ordered to escort her back to the UK.

Captain Nicholson decided that midnight on 25/26th September would be the best time to rendezvous, thus allowing approach and withdrawal during the hours of darkness. The three Tribals temporarily reversed course at high speed just before it got dark, to mislead any enemy observers. The final run in was at a slower speed so as not to create too much wash. Just before midnight, lookouts sighted dim lights – it was a perfect rendezvous.

The little force withdrew without incident and was met in the forenoon by capital ships of the Home Fleet. *Ark Royal*'s Skuas shot down one of three shadowing Do18s – the first enemy aircraft to be shot down in the Second World War. The flying boat landed close to *Somali* and the two German airmen were made prisoner. The Somalis dearly wanted to take the thing in tow – an enemy flying boat captured on the high seas! But they were peremptorily ordered to sink it.

It was just as well, for the fleet was presently attacked by enemy aircraft, the first air raid experienced by the Navy in the War. No damage was done although there were a number of unpleasant nearmisses and the Luftwaffe made the first of their

claims that they had sunk *Ark Royal*. As the first aircraft came over, one imperturbable signalman continued to make the challenge and was heard to remark, "Funny, sir. No reply."

Perhaps he was not just being pedantic. Challenge and reply were vital throughout the war, especially during night operations. Later that night, *Matabele* twice identified herself just in time when she encountered other British ships in the darkness.

After this excitement *Mashona* returned to more routine destroyer work. There was a submarine hunt in Scapa Flow itself after *Royal Oak* had been torpedoed. There was the chase to intercept *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* after they had sunk *Rawalpindi*. There were convoys to be escorted and capital ships to be screened. There was always vile winter weather.

In March 1940, *Mashona* completed a refit at Chatham which included degaussing. She returned to Scapa Flow in time to take part in another Norwegian convoy. When hostilities came to Norway, *Mashona* was one of the destroyers which collected various merchant ships in those waters and shepherded them across the North Sea.

Among the ships leaving Norway to continue the fight overseas, was the torpedo boat *Draug*. Although his 540-ton boat had been built in 1908 and had four old-fashioned funnels, the Norwegian captain declared that he was quite capable of steaming across the North Sea and fighting off the German Navy all on his own. But his protests were overruled and *Mashona*, *Sikh* and *Mohawk* escorted him on his journey to the Shetlands.

Mashona then joined the Home Fleet and was with *Afridi* and *Gurkha* when the latter was sunk. From the open sea the Tribals moved into the fiords of Norway, ferrying troops to Namsos at night, screening transports out at sea during the day, and being bombed whenever enemy aircraft presented themselves. There was virtually no air cover and there were not enough AA guns, especially close range weapons to deal with divebombers. Extra automatic weapons such as Bren guns were fitted whenever these could be obtained.

By the end of April, the land campaign in central Norway was going badly for the Allies and it was decided to withdraw. While *Afridi* and her destroyers went to Namsos, *Somali*, *Mashona*, *Tartar* and *Sikh* joined the force that was sent to evacuate the troops south of Trondheim.

Although there was no air activity during the few hours of darkness there were no navigational aids either, and it was extremely hazardous operating in the narrow, tortuous and rocky fiords. *Wanderer* ran aground at Afarnes and had to be towed off by *Sikh*. The piers were frequently ricketty wooden jetties and the slightest nudge by a 2,000-ton destroyer could have sent jetty, troops and equipment into the cold, dark waters.

Yet the troops were taken off from Molde and Andalsnes and Afarnes and Veblungnes and Alesund. Sometimes the destroyers ferried troops from the burning port out to transports or to cruisers. Sometimes they took them themselves. They took off army and navy base staffs. They took off a Royal Marine colonel who had been shot in the ankle at Gallipoli and was very annoyed that the Germans had now got the

other one. They took off a bitterly disappointed naval officer who had been looking forward so much to fishing the River Raum. They took off General Ruge, the Norwegian Commander, who was taken to Tromso, where he could continue to fight for Norway. They took off a Norwegian shipowner and his family and they took off Norwegian nurses. They took off troops and more troops.

When it got light they headed out to sea and went in again the next night to take off the remainder and then the rearguard. At last, crammed with people, the cruisers, destroyers and transports moved out to sea, and so to safety in the UK.

Farther north operations were still being conducted against Narvik, and the Allies were still planning to capture the place. Troop convoys had to be escorted to Harstad, the advance base for the assault force, and *Mashona* shared in this work and in screening the carrier *Ark Royal*.

But, soon after its capture, Narvik had to be evacuated and on 6th June *Valiant*, *Tartar*, *Mashona*, *Bedouin* and *Ashanti* left Scapa Flow to cover the withdrawal. Apart from escorting the evacuation convoys, they also hunted, without success, for *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisnau* after the German battlecruisers had sunk *Glorious*.

Tartar, *Maori* and *Mashona* exercised the British Government's "Right of Angary" over four Swedish warships on 20th June and then the Tribals returned to screening the Home Fleet capital ships. It was on the next of these sweeps that they ran into heavy weather. Freak mountainous waves are often mentioned in accounts of Atlantic gales, but on this occasion *Mashona* found herself poised over a Rift Valley of a trough.

She dropped and hit the bottom of the trough with such a smack that her bottom plating was weakened. It was the only time in his experience that Commander Selby had to shore downwards to stop the bottom crumpling in. Arriving at Rosyth to be drydocked on 27th June, they found that 240 rivets had to be tightened.

After more patrols with *Tartar*, *Bedouin* and the other Tribals, *Mashona* arrived at Liverpool for refit in August 1940. She was immediately docked so that she could be inspected by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, and was promptly undocked for deammunitioning. It was just as well as there was an air raid on Merseyside that night.

Apart from normal refit work and repairs to weather damage, the 4.7in mounting in 'X' position was replaced by a twin 4in AA. The refit was completed on 5th October, and for the rest of 1940, *Mashona* was employed on patrols and convoy escort in the Western Approaches, especially north-west of Ireland. One of her tasks involved rescuing survivors from the liner *Rotorua*, torpedoed on 11th December, 110 miles west of St Kilda.

Emergency sailing orders came through one dark January night when in Gutter Sound at Scapa Flow. The signal did not specify which boom gate was to be used as exit and in the confusion, *Mashona* collided with *Sikh* who was moored at a buoy near the floating dock. One officer in *Sikh* was particularly annoyed as he woke up in his bunk to find *Mashona*'s bow between him and the door of his cabin. He had to stay there until the offending object was removed.

Mashona's repairs were completed at Hartlepool on 3rd March. There were a number of patrols and sweeps in the Atlantic and then on 22nd May, *Somali*, *Eskimo*, *Tartar* and *Mashona* left the Clyde escorting *Rodney* and *Britannic* en route to Boston. On 24th May they were involved in the *Bismarck* hunt. While the liner and *Eskimo* continued on their way, *Rodney*, *Somali*, *Tartar* and *Mashona* set course to intercept *Bismarck*.

Soon the Tribals were running short of fuel and the Admiralty ordered Captain Vian's destroyers to relieve them. *Somali* ran short first and had to head for base. When she eventually reached harbour she only had nineteen tons left and had lost suction in several of her oil fuel tanks. *Tartar* and *Mashona* had a little more, but soon after dawn on 27th May they too had to leave. They did get a look at their cornered quarry as the battleships went into action, and then *Tartar* and *Mashona* were on their own, proceeding at 15 knots to save fuel.

Next day an Fw200 appeared. It was joined by several pairs of He111s and they began an almost continuous series of bombing runs over the two destroyers. Three-bomb sticks exploded around them. All were misses.

Perhaps the middle bomb in one stick had a bent fin. It seemed to wobble a bit as it fell. That one did not miss. It struck *Mashona*'s port side abreast the forefunnel, penetrated No. 1 boiler room and exploded there, blowing a huge hole in the side. No. 2 boiler room bulkhead held and shoring up began, but nothing could be done with the forward bulkhead – it looked like a lace curtain.

The air attacks did not abate. As *Mashona* listed to port, her guns were hand trained to starboard. There might be no power, but at least they could fire at anything rash enough to fly directly overhead. Meanwhile gear was jettisoned and for 45 minutes they worked to save their ship. But it was no use. *Mashona* was listing farther with each roll – and not coming back. Over on her beam ends, they abandoned ship.

For an hour there was a miraculous lull in the bombing. *Tartar* picked them up, her crew diving overboard to save those weakening in the oily water. Commander Selby was the last to leave as he thought, but to his chagrin a young sailor, who had failed to hear the order "Abandon ship", slid down the side after him. He was reminded in naval terms of the Captain's privilege. 46 were lost altogether. The ship's Battle Ensign was saved and is now in the Cathedral at Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.

Then the bombing began again. *Mashona* and *Tartar* were chummy ships. Their crews sorted themselves into two shifts for the passage to Londonderry. When the *Tartar* gunners got tired, a *Mashona* team took over.

Meanwhile, *Mashona* was still lying on her side, refusing to sink. *Tartar* fired a torpedo – and missed. "It looks like she doesn't want to sink her old mate."

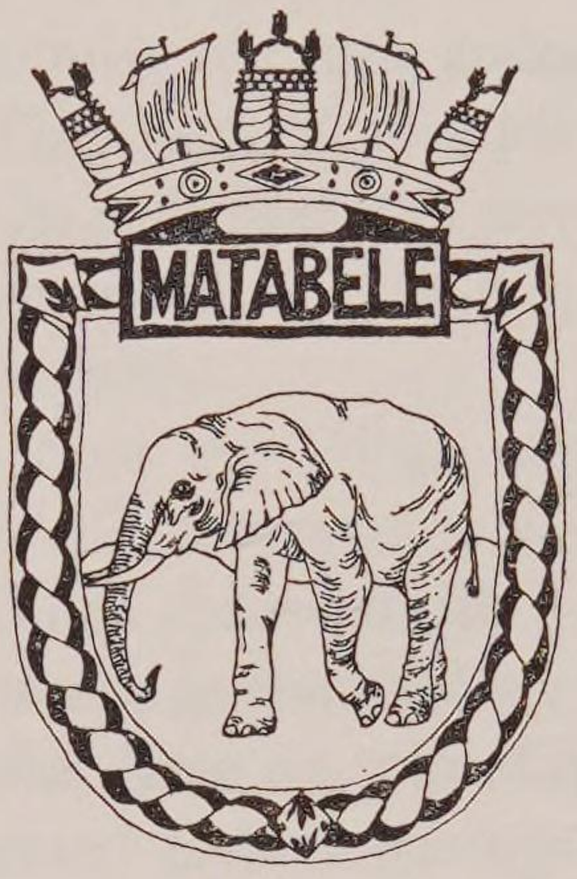
Sherwood and *St Clair* had arrived and they were ordered to blow holes in the hulk. The shells hit, the air rushed out, and *Mashona* was gone.

Commanding Officers

Cdr P. W. McLaughlin, RN 1st March 1939 – 22nd January 1940.
Cdr W. H. Selby, RN 23rd January 1940 – 28th May 1941.

Pennant Numbers

L59 August 1938 – December 1938
F59 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G59 Autumn 1940 – May 1941



HMS Matabele

First of name

Builders: Scotts Shipbuilding & Engineering Co, Greenock
Engined by: Scotts Shipbuilding & Engineering Co, Greenock
Ordered: June 1936
Laid Down: 1st October 1936
Launched: 6th October 1937 (by Mrs S. M. Lanigan O'Keefe)
Commissioned: 25th January 1939

EVERY SHIP in the pre-war Royal Navy had a home port – Devonport, Portsmouth or Chatham. When a warship commissioned she drew her complement from the naval barracks at her home port. She gave leave at her home port and, when decommissioning, returned her crew to the same barracks and drafting office. It might be necessary for her to load ammunition or be repaired or carry out trials elsewhere, but it was always to Guz or Pompey or Tiddley Chats that she returned. This system was generally followed during the Second World War, but was subsequently superseded by centralised drafting.

Matabele was a Devonport ship. She arrived at Plymouth on 26th January 1939 and after all the usual trials, went to Portland to join the 2nd Tribal DF. On 3rd May she accompanied *Somali*, *Eskimo* and *Ashanti* on a goodwill visit to Cherbourg. The loss of the submarine *Thetis* occurred at the beginning of June, and afterwards there was a whole series of exercises preparing the flotilla and the fleet for war.

Soon after the outbreak of war, however, *Matabele* had to be docked and two new propellers were fitted, but she was ready in time to help rescue the submarine *Spearfish* on 26/27th September. A winter of North Atlantic patrols and escorts followed, usually in very rough weather, and at high speed. By 9th March 1940, *Matabele* had completed refit and degaussing at Plymouth.

One month later she was forming part of the Home Fleet destroyer screen in the North Sea. Presently she was detached with *Afridi* and other Tribals and cruisers to attack Bergen, but the operation was cancelled. Air attacks developed and *Gurkha* was sunk.

For the next ten days *Matabele* moved up and down the fiords of Norway, ferrying soldiers ashore at Namsos and other little ports, and screening transports out at sea during the daytime – always under air attack or its shadow.

After Central Norway had been evacuated, *Matabele* moved north to take part in the operations against Narvik. The German advance northwards also continued and Allied troops were despatched to stop them. On 17/18th May, *Effingham*, *Coventry*, *Cairo*, *Matabele* and *Echo* were hurrying round from Harstad to Bodo. These waters

were poorly charted and *Effingham* and *Matabele* ran onto the Faksen Shoal between the islands of Bricksvaer and Terra.

The Tribal got off, but the big cruiser was stuck fast. The South Wales Borderers, their equipment and their Bren-gun carriers were transferred to other ships and they all returned to Harstad after *Matabele* had torpedoed *Effingham* to hasten her demise.

Although she got back safely, *Matabele* needed substantial repairs, and the opportunity was also taken to replace 'X' mounting with twin 4in AA. This work was completed at Falmouth by mid-August 1940.

After an autumn spent waiting for the invasion, *Matabele* served with the Home Fleet for most of the second stormy winter of the war. In April 1941 she underwent an extensive refit at Barrow-in-Furness. Her after funnel was cut down, her mainmast removed and radar installed. It was completed on 27th May, but *Matabele* ran aground when leaving Barrow. The resulting repairs meant that she could not rejoin the fleet until August.

Like *Ashanti*, *Matabele* was again employed on patrolling, exercising and screening capital ships. She helped to escort the new Governor to the Faeroe Islands, and took part in a carrier strike against Bodo on 9th October.

Far away in London and Moscow, and on the plains of Eastern Europe, events were taking place, and decisions were being made that would affect all the Tribals then in service with the Home Fleet. Russia needed supplies if she were to hold the German onslaught. This aid would have to be sent from Britain, by sea to Murmansk and Archangel, skirting an enemy-held coastline for most of the way. So began the Kola Run. Every convoy route experienced attack by aircraft, surface vessels and submarines, but bitter cold, violent storms and exhausting fatigue gave the Russian convoys a peculiar horror.

They began quietly enough in September 1941. Although the convoys were only weakly escorted at first, the German High Command did not immediately realise what was happening. By the end of the year, 750 tanks, 800 fighters, 1,400 vehicles and over 100,000 tons of supplies had reached Russia virtually unmolested. Then, almost hesitantly, the enemy began to deploy his forces against these convoys.

On 8th January 1942, *Somali* and *Matabele* were ordered to join the escort of PQ8. They fuelled and left Seidisfiord two days later.

On 17th January, they had almost reached their destination when the *SS Harmatris* was torpedoed by a U-boat. The rest of the convoy soon arrived in harbour, with *Harmatris* some distance astern, under tow and escorted by the Tribals. It was dark and bitterly cold.

Just off Kola Inlet there was a blinding flash – and nothing more. *Somali* got some sort of asdic contact on U-454, but her depth-charge gear was badly frozen up and her counter-attack was ineffective. Meanwhile three men had been picked up by *Harrier* – from *Matabele*. They told their story.

Matabele had been torpedoed and had sunk in two minutes. Even in that time many had managed to abandon ship – to be frozen to death in the icy waters.

Commanding Officers

Cdr G. K. Whitmy-Smith, RN 10th January 1939 – 30th April 1940.
Cdr G. H. Stokes, RN 1st May 1940 – 24th October 1940.
Cdr R. St. V. Sherbrooke, DSO, RN 25th October 1940 – 14th April 1941.
Cdr A. C. Stafford, DSC, RN 15th April 1941 – 17th January 1942.

Pennant Numbers

L26 December 1938
F26 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G26 Autumn 1940 – January 1942

HMCS Micmac

First of name

Builders: Halifax Shipyards
Engined by: John Inglis, Halifax
Ordered: June 1941
Laid Down: 20th May 1942
Launched: 18th September 1943
Commissioned: 18th September 1945

MICMAC WAS the only Tribal who never fired her guns in action. The first destroyer to be built in Canada, she was completed too late to see service in the Second World War. She was therefore commissioned as a training-ship, spending virtually the whole of her life in this employment. Aboard her, officers and men learnt the technique of destroyer-handling and the intricacies of naval equipment.

The use of one particular ship for training programmes meant that they could be completed without interruption, while operational vessels could be sure that their personnel already had some basic experience when they joined. Of course, in peace-time, the exercises and cruises of operational and training ships are often indistinguish-able, and *Micmac* was frequently detached on a variety of special missions.

Micmac's trials and working-up had begun before she was commissioned, so that she was able to start her service with the RCN in October 1945. For her first pro-gramme, *Micmac* embarked trainees from *HMCS Cornwallis*, the base in Nova Scotia, for gunnery and anti-submarine exercises. While carrying out this work, she also found time to escort the liner-transports *Ile De France* and *Queen Elizabeth* into Halifax, and took General Crerar (lately Canadian Army Commander in Europe) and his party on a tour of the Maritime Provinces.

Micmac suffered some damage to her starboard side when *Sioux* berthed alongside her, and on 21st December, she was struck by the port bow of the tug *Glenside*. The tug had a fender in that position to prevent damage to other ships, but it had become sodden with water and had then frozen. The result was more damage to *Micmac*'s starboard quarter.

It had been suggested that *Micmac* should spend part of 1946 visiting ports on the Pacific coast, but as she was then the only destroyer in commission on the east coast, it was decided that she should stay in the Atlantic. So, in January, after repairs to her fire-control system, *Micmac* carried out eight weeks' intensive new entry training at Bermuda. Every Monday she went to Murray's Anchorage for harbour drills, going out into the Atlantic for sea exercises. Every Saturday she returned to Ireland Island Dockyard.

On 14th February, *Micmac* went out to meet *Caistor Castle*, escorting a group of four LCIs. LCI164 had broken down; *Micmac* stood by her all night, and at dawn tried to take her in tow. Heavy seas twice threw the 300-ton LCI onto *Micmac* and once the tow parted. However, they persisted, and LCI164 was eventually got into Bermuda. *Micmac* had to undergo hull repairs to this collision damage until 5th March.

At the end of the month, *Micmac* and *Middlesex* went out from Halifax to meet *Warrior*, Canada's new carrier. *Micmac* served as plane guard while aircraft were flown ashore before *Warrior* entered Halifax.

The pattern of these events was to be repeated over and over again during *Micmac*'s life – training programmes, exercises, visits, dockings, and an occasional special assignment or emergency call.

Micmac escorted *Aquitania* and *Mauretania*, respectively taking the new Governor-General (Field-Marshal Alexander) and the CIGS (Field-Marshal Montgomery) into Halifax. *Nootka* was in company for this latter task and the two Tribals were often together from now on.

They encountered violent seas on their way to Bermuda after *Micmac*'s refit in January 1947, and they had to heave-to for several hours. Some slight damage was done to the superstructure of both ships and *Micmac* had her motor-boat stove in. In March, *Micmac* and *Nootka* met *Warrior* outside the Panama Canal after she had wintered at Esquimalt. The three ships then paid a formal visit to Havana, the first peacetime call by the RCN since 1929. There were a number of ceremonial functions as well as a carnival. Wreaths were laid at the memorials to Pierre Lemoyne (a Canadian-born explorer of 1706) and José Marti, Cuba's national hero.

Micmac began a refit at Halifax on 27th March. Changes in her automatic armament were completed on 9th July and a week later *Micmac* slipped for her full-power trials off Halifax. The weather was foggy, although visibility seemed to be improving, but suddenly *Micmac* entered an extensive area of dense, low-lying fogsmoke. Speed was reduced and the destroyer altered course 20° to starboard to keep well clear of the lightship. Almost immediately a fresh radar contact appeared on the screen almost dead ahead. *Micmac* went hard a'starboard and full astern, but the bow of the 10,000-ton freighter *Yarmouth County* crashed into the port side of the Tribal's fo'c'sle.

Later investigation showed that a 5° obscured sector on the radar screen had hidden *Yarmouth County* until *Micmac* altered course. But at the time, the important thing was to get the ship back safely. Fortunately there were no leaks abaft No. 5 bulkhead, and that held firm while the destroyer returned to port at 4 – 6 knots. Above the water-line, however, there was extensive damage and serious casualties. Fifteen men had been injured and ten were killed or missing, including a dockyard worker. *Haida* and the tugs *Riverton* and *Glendyne* stood by until *Micmac* had secured alongside the jetty.

Micmac was paid off into reserve, but to avoid undue deterioration, she was kept "hot" during the autumn and winter months, and was also drydocked at six-monthly intervals. Later it was decided that she should be partially converted to a destroyer escort. A triple-barrelled squid was mounted at 'A' position and quadruple 40mm

guns at 'B'. There were two twin 4in mountings aft and a further four single bofors.

The conversion was finished on 16th November 1949. On 9th January 1950, *Micmac* sailed for Bermuda for working-up and a return to exercises and visits in the Caribbean and Western Atlantic. For most of the year she acted as *Magnificent*'s plane guard and on 25th February rescued the observer of a Firefly that had crashed while landing on. The pilot could not be found. Another Firefly ditched on 7th June. This time the pilot was picked up but there was no trace of his seaman passenger.

Later in 1950, *Magnificent*, *Huron* and *Micmac* formed the Canadian Special Service Squadron for a diplomatic cruise to Europe. They returned to Halifax on 27th November.

Hull repairs lasted for most of December and in January 1951 *Micmac* accompanied *Huron* on the first stage of the latter's passage to Korea. *Micmac*, however, remained in the Caribbean and the waters around Bermuda. *Magnificent* transferred two scientists to her to study seasickness, but the destroyer's motion made them so ill that they were not seen above decks. Meanwhile, *Micmac* had practised towing *Crescent* but the exercise had to be broken off because of bad weather. She soon had to cope with the real thing.

On 3rd April, *Micmac* found the 500-ton passenger ship *Gilbert Jr* drifting 190 miles off Curaçao. Due to a going-away party, *Gilbert Jr*'s tanks had not been filled and she had run out of fuel two days previously. She had on board a crew of sixteen, twelve passengers (eight of them women), two horses and a flock of chickens. *Micmac* took her in tow, but all the derelict's gear was rotten and the cable chafed through at the fairleads. The break was repaired and they reached Willemstad the following afternoon at a speed of 9 knots.

On two occasions in May, after more exercises and visits, *Micmac* took 75 dockyard workers and 50 relatives for trips off Halifax, including a depth-charge attack in the programme.

Refit over, *Magnificent* and *Micmac* left Halifax on 7th August for the Mediterranean. Three days out, a Sea Fury ditched 25 miles away. *Micmac* raced to the rescue preparing blankets and medical facilities, and expecting serious injuries if not tragedy. When she arrived, the grinning pilot was quite unharmed and seemed happy to go on sunbathing and paddling his rubber dinghy around the Atlantic.

Their Mediterranean visits and exercises included a memorable occasion when *Micmac* fired all four torpedoes, recovered them and had the boat back inboard – all within fifteen minutes. *Magnificent* and *Micmac* arrived back at Halifax on 24th October, the last three days having been rather worrying for the destroyer men. A defective oil hose had prevented *Micmac* refuelling from the carrier. Not only was she short of fuel (less than forty tons were left on board), but two oil tanks had to be flooded to maintain stability.

Micmac's last duty before her full conversion to a destroyer-escort, began on 8th November. She escorted *Ontario* taking Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh from Charlottetown to Sydney and St John's (Newfoundland). On the 12th the Royal party left in the liner *Empress of Scotland*. They were escorted until sunset by

Ontario and *Micmac* and then the cruiser and Tribal returned to Halifax. *Micmac* was paid off on 30th November.

Now *Micmac*'s four 4in guns were mounted forward, while two triple-barrelled squid mountings were installed aft. Two 3in/50 guns were carried on the superstructure aft and she was also armed with four 40mm guns while retaining her torpedo-tubes. A lightweight lattice mast was constructed and *Micmac*'s standard displacement rose to 2,200 tons (2,800 tons full load). She recommissioned at Halifax on 14th August 1953.

Micmac's sea-trials and working-up shaded into a programme of training exercises and cruises to ports on the eastern seaboard and in the Caribbean. But there were some interruptions. In October 1953 a leak developed at the junction of No. 5 and 6 oil fuel tanks. A trip to Bermuda had to be temporarily postponed while this potential fire hazard was repaired. Then in November, *Micmac* served as guardship during a Royal transatlantic flight. On 3rd April 1954, a small fire broke out in the CPO's and PO's pantry, but that did not prevent *Micmac* taking the Junior Officers Technical and Leadership Course on a fortnight's training cruise to Providence, Rhode Island. Returning to Halifax, however, she had to spend 17th – 25th April making good the various electrical defects caused by the fire.

1953 was the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of the RNVR, but the observance of its Golden Jubilee was postponed for a year, so as not to conflict with the Coronation. Canada's contingent embarked in *Micmac* and sailed from Halifax on 30th May 1954. The parade was held on 12th June, *Micmac* being berthed at Portsmouth. Apart from this, her principal mission, *Micmac* carried out three other tasks during her trip, before arriving back at Halifax on 23rd June. She reported the position of a dangerous iceberg three days out from Halifax, painted ship in four hours four minutes at the Azores, and succoured a weary homing pigeon that made an emergency landing 140 miles from Portsmouth. After rest and replenishment, the bird took off again for an undeclared destination.

July meant Gunnery School training at Bermuda, and then *Micmac* was used for making an epic instructional film entitled 'Anchors and Cables'. On 5th August, *Micmac*, with a party of cadets on board, met *Britannia* on her way to Montreal and Quebec. The Duke of Edinburgh visited the Royal Yacht at Quebec and *Micmac* supplied guard-boats and sentries for the occasion. While the Duke of Edinburgh went on ahead by air, *Britannia* and *Micmac* proceeded to Goose Bay in Labrador. Here the Duke of Edinburgh boarded the Royal Yacht for his return to the UK and *Quebec* joined the escort. On 18th August, a CPO in the cruiser developed appendicitis and had to be transferred by jackstay to *Micmac*. Halifax was too far away so he was rushed to the Grenfell Mission Hospital at St Anthony in Newfoundland.

Micmac was present at the September Fisheries Exhibition at Lunenburg, having taken the Governor-General (Mr Vincent Massey) and his party to the Nova Scotian port. Visits to Florida and southern Nova Scotia followed before *Micmac* began a refit that lasted from December to April 1955.

The spring and summer of 1955 was spent exercising off Bermuda and the eastern USA with *Magnificent* and *Haida*. On 22nd August the submarine *Halfbeak* touched *Micmac*'s starboard propeller guard at New York. Divers found a very slight chip in the propeller, but *Micmac* was still able to join *Haida*, *Huron*, *Iroquois*, *Magnificent* and other RCN ships in a European and Mediterranean cruise.

Pacific coast ships shared in Caribbean exercises in the spring of 1956, *Micmac* beating the rest of the force to rescue the crew of a missing Avenger.

Funnel caps were fitted during a refit which lasted from May to September 1956 and then *Micmac* joined *Huron* and *Iroquois* in a cruise to the UK, France and Portugal. The sole mishap occurred on 14th November, when the ship's jeep ran off the jetty into the water. No one was hurt and the damaged jeep was recovered by divers and a crane.

December exercises at Bermuda were not quite so fortunate. *Micmac* lost one of the torpedoes she had fired. The whole squadron had to search for it, but the expensive weapon was never found. Returning to Halifax on 12th December, *Algonquin* and *Micmac* decided to carry out their quarterly full-power trials. They reached full speed after 90 minutes but just before noon, vibration caused a break in the hydraulic line to *Micmac*'s steering-engine starboard pressure gauge. Fluid poured out and the rudder immediately jammed hard a'starboard. At that speed the turn threw the ship in the opposite direction so she heeled over violently 25° to port. The upper deck was partially submerged and men were almost swept overboard, but they managed to hang on.

Micmac experienced a number of difficulties during her exercises in the Caribbean early in 1957. Her port condenser gave trouble at Puerto Rico, while on 27th April she struck her port propeller on a coral pinnacle near Bermuda after a buoy had moved. Dockyard examination showed that one blade had a 5ft 9in dent in it. Severe vibration set in at any speed except 14½ knots, and *Micmac* was sent to Quonset Point, Rhode Island. The propeller was removed and sent to Boston where it was straightened out. On 6th May it was all done and *Micmac* was rejoining her squadron at 26 knots.

During a St Lawrence cruise later in May, *Micmac* was ordered to stand by at Sydney. The 7,000-ton Italian merchant ship *Fides* had run aground on Scatarie Island and needed help. Personnel were recalled by radio, police and shore patrols, and the ship also embarked pressmen and photographers, ready for a good story. After all that, *Micmac*'s assistance was not required.

Micmac was open to visitors at most ports during this successful cruise, and her crew also organised parties for local orphans. In July 1957 there were more exercises and a docking at St John, New Brunswick.

Bermuda, the UK, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Norway, the Azores, Newfoundland, the USA, the West Indies, the Maritime Provinces, the Bahamas, were all visited by *Micmac* during the next few years. She practised armament, screening, towing, landing, boarding and navigation exercises with Canadian, British, American, Norwegian, German, Dutch and French carriers, cruisers,

escorts, submarines and auxiliaries. She ferried Special Air Service troops from Harwich to Copenhagen and took the body of a retired naval officer for burial at sea off Halifax. She lost two men overboard and, during periodic dockings, had a new sonar-dome fitted, a crack in a hull plate put right, and her boats repaired.

Precautions were taken in time and the foretopmast was strengthened at Charleston in February 1958. Post-refit trials in March 1959 were delayed by contamination of the lubricating oil system. It had to be completely flushed out before *Micmac* could use her main engines on 29th April, when she began degaussing, compass-swinging and all the various trials that necessarily last a month or more.

In the summer of 1959, *Athabaskan*, *Cayuga* and *Micmac* helped escort *Britannia* during the Royal opening of the St Lawrence Seaway, and *Micmac* was also present when the Royal party visited Halifax. Three times in 1959 *Micmac* had trouble with the port condenser, and the feed-water tanks and boilers had to be washed out after repairs had been done. The last time repairs took all October and both condensers were completely retubed at Halifax. Because of this *Micmac*'s cruise to Europe had to be cancelled.

She suffered further setbacks when she went to Bermuda for exercises in November. Damage resulted from very heavy weather and from a collision with *Cayuga* during a jackstay transfer.

Micmac carried out a fishery protection patrol off Newfoundland in February 1961, making sure that foreign trawlers were not fishing inside Canadian territorial waters. No incident resulted, although *Micmac*'s radar operators reported that as soon as the destroyer appeared, every trawler switched on its own radar to check its position from the shore.

While returning from this patrol, *Micmac* picked up a call from the Dutch motor vessel *Prins Willem*, who had broken down near Sable Island. In spite of a fierce blizzard cutting visibility to 25 yards, *Micmac* found and closed her, but *Prins Willem* had sorted out her problems and was no longer in need of help.

Labour troubles seriously delayed *Micmac*'s 1961 refit at St John. The ship's company had to cover or preserve all gear left out in the open and liable to be affected by weather and moisture. They also had to put out a fire in their sleeping quarters ashore. When the strike was over, there was some administrative confusion regarding the allocation of funds for the refit. The result was that *Micmac* did not return to Halifax until 21st December. Even then her guns had to be remounted, as they had been removed on 9th March before leaving Halifax.

Misfortune continued to dog *Micmac*'s post-refit working-up at Bermuda in February and March 1962. She had a steering breakdown, a weed-choked condenser inlet, a main circulating pump failure, more condenser trouble, an eye injury and a case of acute appendicitis. At the end of March *Micmac* had to return to Halifax for almost a month's repair.

Micmac accompanied *Bonaventure*, *Athabaskan*, *Cayuga*, *Nootka* and *Crescent* during their visit to Europe in late 1962, suffering more defects during the cruise. Most of February 1963 was taken up with repairing the starboard main steam line, but

Micmac was not the only one in trouble. The following month, her diver helped *Cayuga* free a buoy cable from the latter's starboard propeller. This happened near Norfolk, Virginia.

In July 1963 a crack was found in a plate just above the waterline. No sooner had this been patched when a steam leak occurred in No. 3 boiler. *Micmac* was secured alongside the Naval Armament Depot jetty at Dartmouth, landing ammunition prior to this repair, when the main gate telephoned to say that a band of Indians had arrived to visit the ship. A dozen Micmacs in tribal regalia came on board led by a "medicine man garbed in a manner calculated to put evil spirits to flight and almost succeeded in doing the same for the officer of the watch".

Their leader told Commander Cutts that he had been instructed by the tribal chief to visit and bless the ship. The appropriate ceremony was performed on the fo'c'sle and afterwards the braves and maidens toured the ship and lunched on board.

The autumn of 1963 saw *Micmac*'s last cruise – a visit to European waters. Soon after her return to Halifax on 13th December 1963 she was declared surplus to requirements. She was sold to Marine Salvage Ltd., resold by them and arrived at Faslane in October 1964 to be broken up.

Commanding Officers

Lt-Cdr R. L. Hennessy, DSC, RCN 12th September 1945 – 27th March 1947.
Lt-Cdr J. C. Littler, RCN 28th March 1947 – 5th September 1947.
Lt-Cdr F. C. Frewer, CD, RCN 16th November 1949 – 30th November 1951.
Cdr G. M. Wadds, CD, RCN 14th August 1953 – 26th August 1954.
Cdr J. C. Smyth, CD, RCN 27th August 1954 – 1st September 1955.
Cdr E. T. G. Madgwick, DSC, CD, RCN 2nd September 1955 – 8th July 1956.
Cdr L. B. Jenson, CD, RCN 9th July 1956 – 4th August 1957.
Cdr N. Cogdon, CD, RCN 5th August 1957 – 13th June 1958.
Cdr A. B. German, CD, RCN 10th March 1959 – 15th December 1959.
Cdr G. R. Smith, CD, RCN 16th December 1959 – 9th February 1961.
Cdr W. J. Stuart, CD, RCN 10th February 1961 – 14th August 1962.
Lt-Cdr J. M. Cutts, CD, RCN 15th August 1962 – 21st March 1964.

Pennant Numbers

R10 December 1944 – September 1949
DDE214 October 1949 – October 1964

HMS Mohawk

Eleventh of name

Builders: John I. Thornycroft & Co, Woolston, Southampton
Engined by: John I. Thornycroft & Co, Woolston, Southampton
Ordered: 10th March 1936
Laid Down: 16th July 1936
Launched: 5th October 1937
Commissioned: 9th September 1938

In the quiet churchyard of Boughton Monchelsea, overlooking the Kent countryside, lies the grave of Commander Richard Frank Jolly, GC, RN – posthumous holder of the highest decoration awarded to the Tribals.

When he took command of *Mohawk*, she was still being completed at Woolston. At one time it had been suggested that *Mohawk* should be the lead ship of the class and she received frequent visits from Admiralty officials during her construction. Thornycrofts made a full-sized mock-up of her bridge and a committee, including Captain Lord Mountbatten, came to to discuss the positioning of all her controls and instruments. As it happened her completion was delayed by industrial difficulties. Builder's trials were carried out, but she was not ready for her crew until September 1938.

On 6th September, a steaming party was sent round by rail from Portsmouth. They marched through the pouring rain to the local drill hall where they ate their packed dinners of corned beef sandwiches, washed down with tea provided by the WVS. Down on the river, motor-boats took them to a brand-new shining *Mohawk*. Even the deck was painted and she was such a showpiece that the crew had not been allowed on board until the relevant authorities had inspected her. The reputation of being a spotless and very efficient ship never left her.

Next day they did full-power acceptance trials, returning to Netley Roads, where all the contractors left the ship. The engine room personnel felt a little overawed by all the complicated machinery they had seen only the night before. So Commander Jolly delayed entering Portsmouth until they had seen how everything worked.

During the Munich Crisis, it looked as though *Mohawk* would be joining the Home Fleet, but as soon as the emergency was over, her original programme was resumed. Her working-up continued at Portland and when finished she sailed for Malta, arriving there on 13th October.

On 4th November, *Mohawk* was patrolling the Malta-Egypt stage of the Vickers Wellesley Long-Distance Flight. The three aircraft passed over safely, refuelled in Egypt and took off again to fly non-stop to Australia. Two made it but one had to land and refuel.

At the end of the month, *Mohawk* went to Cape Helles to embark the British

Ambassador to Turkey. He had been paying his annual visit to the Gallipoli War Graves. *Mohawk* took him and his party back to Istanbul, staying there for the week-end. A shake-down cruise in Greek waters followed, and then *Mohawk* returned to Malta for Christmas.

The festive season was further enlivened by two events. Commander Jolly forsook his customary white gloves and went to the C-in-C's Fancy Dress Ball as "Big Chief Mohawk". Guests invited for tea on Boxing Day included three dance hall girls. One of them, a Portuguese, was very keen to learn how lighting and power was obtained in harbour with cold boilers. This unusual interest was duly reported and, weeks later, they heard that the girl had been arrested as a suspected enemy agent.

In February 1939, *Afridi* took the whole flotilla to Gibraltar for exercises, later splitting up for individual patrols and cruises. On 23rd March, *Mohawk* found a damaged floatplane off Barcelona. It belonged to the German Condor Legion and had been hit by gunfire while operating with General Franco's forces. The five Germans were taken on board and the aircraft sunk. *Mohawk* landed the aircrew at Majorca, the grateful Germans later presenting a fine piece of silver to the destroyer.

Mohawk was visiting Calvi in Corsica when the Albanian crisis occurred. They fused all shell and sailed that evening, being given a tremendous send off by the local people who were all dressed up ready for a dance arranged in *Mohawk*'s honour.

For most of the next few months, *Mohawk* stayed with *Afridi*'s division, cruising along the North African coast, exercising among the Greek islands and visiting Athens. She spent a couple of weeks in August drydocked at Malta, and then returned to the Eastern Mediterranean.

The division had passed through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea when war was declared, but soon returned to the Mediterranean. Contraband control off Italy and Greece resulted in one Bulgarian merchant ship being escorted into Malta for further search. *Afridi* and *Gurkha* had returned to England; *Sikh* developed turbinitis so *Mohawk* joined *Cossack*'s division for a high-speed passage back to the UK.

Cossack, *Maori*, *Mohawk* and *Zulu* collected Home Fleet charts at Portland on 13th October, oiled at Harwich, went on to Methil on the 14th and then met a convoy in the North Sea on the 15th. After one of the escorting destroyers had got an asdic contact, the convoy was left at Methil. By 1100 on the 16th, the Tribals were making for Rosyth, threading their way through the shipping that congested the Firth of Forth swept channels. Their arrival coincided with the Luftwaffe's first air raid on the UK.

RAF planes had been reported in the area and the German aircraft were not immediately identified as hostile. Action stations were sounded as a Ju88 swooped over them, releasing two bombs. One of *Mohawk*'s machine-gun mountings opened fire. The other ships were firing and the Ju88 later crashed, although RAF fighters also claimed it. This incident showed the truth of the old precept that it is the duty of the lesser unit to identify itself, or else the larger unit will treat it as hostile and open fire. This held good for aircraft as well as for warships. In future there would be a

growing tendency for all aircraft to be regarded as hostile unless positively identified as friendly.

The two bombs fell to starboard (abreast the bridge) and to port (abreast the torpedo-tubes), exploding on the surface of the water before most people had reached their action stations. Machine-gun bullets and jagged metal splinters decimated the mooring party on the fo'c'sle, slashed through the bridge, wheelhouse, director and communications system, riddled the funnels and mowed down the men at the machine guns, searchlight and after control position. Fifteen were killed and thirty injured, mostly experienced executive officers and men.

The engine room personnel formed extra first aid parties to take the wounded to the sick bay and emergency quarters. The dead were wrapped in their watch coats and taken to the bathroom.

Up on the bridge, Commander Jolly had a terrible stomach wound. He could hardly hold himself upright; he could hardly speak; but he did not allow himself the comfort of medical attention or the luxury of unconsciousness. *Mohawk* still had thirty-five miles of congested waterway to cover and *Mohawk* was still his ship.

For eighty minutes he conned *Mohawk* towards the safety of harbour. As his strength failed, his voice weakened to a whisper. The navigating officer, himself with a chest wound, had to bend close and relay his orders down the voice pipe. Coming up to the Forth Bridge, *Mohawk* passed cruisers and a carrier. The customary salute was sounded. Commander Jolly turned in his chair, saluted the flagship and collapsed.

For another five hours he lived on; while tugs took his ship under the Forth Bridge and into Rosyth Dockyard; while he was taken ashore, to die in hospital at South Queensferry.

A week later it was announced that he had been awarded the Empire Gallantry Medal, the first time this decoration had been awarded posthumously. After the institution of the George Cross, a Royal Warrant provided that people to whom the medal had been awarded posthumously during the Second World War, should have their medal replaced by the George Cross – a decoration preceded only by the Victoria Cross.

Mohawk's bridge had been extensively damaged, and all the electric wiring in that part of the ship had to be renewed. She was patched up at Rosyth and went round to Hawthorn Leslie's Yard on the Tyne.

Her refit was completed at the same time as *Kelly*'s. The two destroyers left together on 14th December after receiving a signal that two tankers were in trouble off the Tyne. They had been mined, although this was not known at the time and it was believed they had been torpedoed. *Mohawk* picked up survivors from the one sinking by the stern, while *Kelly* went to the one on fire. As she did so, a mine went off under her. *Kelly* was unable to move and *Mohawk* took the crippled destroyer in tow until a tug arrived. *Kelly* was towed back to the yard she had just left.

Mohawk circled the two vessels, screening them from submarine attack until they reached the safety of the Tyne. She then headed north, met *Nubian* and escorted a convoy across to Norway. After waiting in a violent gale fort he return ships the destroyers

took west-bound merchantmen through the Fair Isle Channel and dispersed them into the Atlantic. *Mohawk* and *Nubian* arrived at Greenock on Christmas Day.

Early in 1940 *Mohawk* was engaged on a number of convoy escorts and fleet sweeps in the North Sea and Atlantic. She also had to be docked after a tug ran into her. 3rd March 1940 was perhaps one of her more memorable occasions – she helped escort the brand-new liner *Queen Elizabeth* out of the Clyde on the first stage of her maiden voyage across the Atlantic. *Mohawk* almost missed this trip as the *SS Gartbrattan* collided with her just as the destroyer was getting under way. The damage was up forward, but *Mohawk* carried out her assignment and then went into dock at Troon for repairs and degaussing.

This work was completed on 19th March 1940 and *Mohawk* rejoined her flotilla. *Afridi*, *Gurkha*, *Mohawk* and *Sikh* left Rosyth on 7/8th April 1940 at the beginning of the Norwegian Campaign. On 9th April *Gurkha* was sunk and within a couple of days, *Mohawk* was escorting transports across the North Sea.

On 18th April, she ferried a load of ammunition to Namsos for the other Tribals there. From 24th to 29th April, *Ashanti*, *Nubian*, *Mohawk* and *Sikh* were patrolling the fiords near Trondheim. They hoped to intercept enemy destroyers but were frequently attacked from the air and eventually returned to Scapa Flow.

Mohawk then moved south to the Humber, temporarily joining a striking force of cruisers and destroyers. They were trying to intercept a force of enemy minelayers and on one of their sweeps *Kelly* was torpedoed by an E-boat on 9th May 1940. Although suffering grievous damage, she managed to get back to the UK.

A change of area did not bring relief from the air raids that had been such a permanent feature of operations off Norway. On 10th May, Hitler struck at Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. *Mohawk* was ordered to shell the Dutch coast, the resulting craters preventing German transport aircraft from landing on the sandy beaches.

On 11th May, *Mohawk* and *Vansittart* went into The Hook of Holland to embark British diplomats from The Hague. Other ships were there, landing demolition parties and embarking gold bullion and the Dutch Royal Family. A big gun was firing at intervals somewhere up the river where a pall of smoke covered Rotterdam. Just as the last of the evacuees came on board, aircraft were overhead, their bombs falling all round. Space was cleared around the guns and the passengers hurried below. At full speed, and putting up all they had, the destroyers raced back to Tilbury where the VIPs disembarked.

Ever since the early days of the War, the Admiralty had regarded the Mediterranean as a fairly secure area. Merchant ships were not convoyed and the warships of the Mediterranean Fleet were used to reinforce the Home Fleet. Now the hardening Italian attitude indicated that Italy might soon enter the war on Germany's side.

It was therefore decided that warships should return to the Mediterranean. A powerful force might deter Italian aggression and if this role failed, would be on the spot ready for action. The Norwegian Campaign caused a halt in the despatch of

these reinforcements, but the damage inflicted on the German surface fleet soon enabled them to be resumed.

The Mediterranean Fleet was particularly deficient in destroyers. They had to undertake so many tasks that there were often not enough to screen the big ships so that sometimes fleet operations had to be postponed or all other activities temporarily suspended. This problem persisted throughout the war.

Nubian and *Mohawk* were among the vessels selected for the Mediterranean. *Mohawk* underwent a brief refit at Devonport. Following *Afridi*'s experience when many men were trapped in the fo'c'sle, one scuttle on each messdeck was enlarged as an escape route. Swinging rope ladders were also fitted in the engine and boiler rooms as blast and underwater explosions could shatter fixed ladders.

Nearmisses could also do other damage, which was not apparent until *Mohawk* and *Nubian* were hurrying out to the Mediterranean. Bombs off the Dutch coast, combined with *Mohawk*'s vibration at high speed, shook loose the rivets on her rudder head. Near Gibraltar, *Mohawk* lost control over her steering and was taken into drydock at Gibraltar. The other ships fuelled and went on to Alexandria, arriving there on 23rd May. *Mohawk* came in only six days later. There was just time for the newly-formed 14th DF to clean boilers alongside *Resource* and get to know each other.

At 1645 on 10th June, the Italian Government declared that from 0001 Italy would be at war with the UK. By 0100 the Mediterranean Fleet was at sea. There were fleeting engagements with enemy surface warships and the cruiser *Calypso* was torpedoed and sunk by a U-boat off North Africa. The Fleet approached to within 120 miles of the Italian coast and returned to Alexandria on the evening of the 14th.

Soon after they returned the 14th DF was sent out again on an anti-submarine sweep in the Mediterranean. They patrolled off Scarpanto but only saw one E-boat. The flotilla escorted two French cruisers along the North African coast on 20th-21st June, but again without incident. The first air raid on Alexandria took place on the night of their return, but damage was slight.

Nubian and *Mohawk* were then involved in escorting a convoy from Cape Helles to Alexandria. Other warships in the covering forces sank Italian U-boats and a destroyer, but the two Tribals did not have any such success. The convoy was bombed and there were many nearmisses, but no damage was done.

The difficult situation regarding the demilitarisation of the French Fleet at Alexandria had been resolved by 7th July when *Nubian* and *Mohawk* left with the Mediterranean Fleet to cover the movement of two convoys (one slow, one fast) from Malta to Alexandria. Besides technicians and stores, vital for the equipment of the naval base at Alexandria, the merchant ships were also carrying civilian evacuees.

U-boats near the Fleet were driven off, while high-level bombing attacks began on 8th July and continued for most of the operation. Bombs often fell very close and *Gloucester* had a direct hit on her bridge. Air reconnaissance reported that Italian battleships were at sea and on 9th July the two fleets clashed in the Battle of Calabria.

Nubian, *Mohawk*, *Hero*, *Hereward* and *Decoy* were screening *Warspite* when the flagship went into action against enemy cruisers, themselves pursuing British light

forces. The Italians turned away at 1526 and made smoke. At 1550 *Warspite* opened fire at two Italian battleships which appeared. One was hit and they made off behind a smokescreen.

Meanwhile *Nubian* and *Mohawk* collected *Juno* and *Janus* to counter-attack any of the sixteen cruisers and thirty-two destroyers which might dart out of the smoke to fire torpedoes at long range. Two passed close under *Nubian*'s stern, but they all missed. By 1640 all enemy ships had disappeared beyond the smokescreens. They were out of sight by the time the British ships had worked round to avoid a suspected submarine ambush. Italian bombers now arrived, part of their four-hour attack being directed against their own ships over the horizon to the north.

That night *Eagle* flew off a strike against Augusta and on 10th July *Royal Sovereign*, *Nubian*, *Mohawk* and *Janus* went into Malta to top up their tanks. They rejoined the Fleet the next day and went on to escort *Warspite* ahead of the main body. They passed close to the convoys and fought off air attacks for two days. One man was badly injured by a nearmiss on *Vampire*. He was transferred to *Mohawk* for treatment, but died soon afterwards. They arrived at Alexandria just after dawn on the 13th.

For the next month the 14th DF was involved in a series of sweeps and patrols in the Eastern Mediterranean, hunting for U-boats and surface ships. Sometimes they were bombed, but action was rare, although other vessels had some success. They also searched for the steamer *Hermione* carrying petrol for the Italians in the Dodecanese, but without finding her. A few days later, while the Fleet was covering another Aegean convoy, *Hermione* was successfully intercepted and sunk after her crew had taken to the boats near land.

The Fleet carried out a sweep in the Eastern Mediterranean to divert the attention of the Italians while *Argus* flew off Hurricanes to Malta from the west. Admiral Cunningham's force attracted some bombs before returning to harbour on 2nd August. The 14th DF then helped to screen *Warspite*, *Malaya*, *Ramillies* and *Kent* when they bombarded Bardia on 17th August. The operation was attended by the usual air attacks which were broken up by fighter cover.

A short break enabled the destroyers to clean boilers and carry out various minor repairs. *Nubian*, for example, was having trouble with her forced lubrication system and this was put right.

On 27th August, *Jervis*, *Nubian*, *Mohawk* and *Juno* left Alexandria to make a fast passage to Gibraltar. Waiting at the western end of the Mediterranean were *Illustrious*, *Valiant*, *Coventry* and *Calcutta* – valuable reinforcements for Admiral Cunningham with their respective advantages of aircraft, radar and AA guns. This was the first time that a squadron or convoy had attempted a complete through passage of the Mediterranean since Italy entered the war. They would be covered part of the way by Force H and then, after calling at Malta, by Admiral Cunningham's ships. The 14th DF would provide a through escort.

There was quite a lot of bombing which damaged a merchantman in the store convoy being escorted from Alexandria to Malta. Otherwise Operation Hats as it was called, was successfully achieved without interference by the Italian Fleet. *Valiant*

and the cruisers unloaded naval, RAF and AA equipment and stores at Malta on 1/2nd September while the destroyers refuelled. All then joined the C-in-C whose return route was planned to cover a southbound Aegean convoy, with an air strike on Rhodes and a bombardment of Scarpanto. All ships returned safely to Alexandria on 5th September in spite of a number of air attacks and an E-boat engagement off Scarpanto.

Ten days later, *Illustrious*, *Valiant*, *Kent* and seven destroyers, including *Mohawk* and *Nubian*, left Alexandria for a successful air strike against Benghasi. Returning, *Kent*, *Mohawk* and *Nubian* were detached to shell Bardia, but about midnight on 17/18th September, before they were in position, *Kent* was hit aft by an Italian torpedo-bomber. *Nubian* took her in tow until the cruiser was able to proceed unaided. Covered by the RAF, the three ships arrived back at Alexandria on 19th September.

From 28/29th September to 2nd October, the Fleet covered the cruisers *Liverpool* and *Gloucester* taking troop reinforcements to Malta. *Mohawk* also went through to Malta. Enemy aircraft and U-boats were active during this operation, while the Italian Fleet was also at sea.

On the next passage of convoys to and from Malta, *Ajax* engaged a group of enemy destroyers. One was sunk and in the morning of 12th October *York* found the crippled *Artigliere*. *Nubian* and *Vampire* had also arrived and they picked up the Italians who were given thirty minutes to abandon ship. *Artigliere* was then torpedoed by *York* and blew up. On the return journey they covered an Aegean convoy evacuating Jewish refugees from Bulgaria and Turkey. The destroyers screened *Illustrious* while she flew off an air strike against Leros on 13/14th October.

No sooner had they reached Alexandria than the destroyers were sent out again to screen the cruiser *Liverpool*, under tow after being torpedoed. They arrived on 16th October and the next day *Nubian* took a delegation of Turkish officials to the port of Mersin on the Turkish coast north of Cyprus.

From 19th to 27th October there was a brief period of quiet. Minor repairs were carried out at Alexandria and *Nubian* was docked for a hot bearing to be looked at. This lull ended on the 28th when Italy attacked Greece. The Fleet sailed that night, sweeping right up into the Ionian Sea, but no Italian forces were encountered. Most British effort was therefore directed, for the next week, in covering the establishment of an advanced base at Suda Bay.

Attempts to engage the Italian Fleet in a full-scale battle had so far been unsuccessful. A new form of naval warfare was about to be tried out, although the Tribals did not learn about it until afterwards. On 6th November, the Mediterranean Fleet left Alexandria to cover convoys to and from Malta. Air attacks were broken up by *Illustrious*' Fulmars and the Fleet continued west of Malta to join fresh warships coming out from the UK. They met on the 10th, the same day that *Nubian* rescued the crew of a Swordfish that ditched taking off from *Illustrious*. Some ships went into Malta to disembark troops and supplies, meeting up again the next day. At 1310 on 11th November, *Orion*, *Ajax*, *Sydney*, *Nubian* and *Mohawk* were detached from the

C-in-C and headed for the Straits of Otranto with the object of "enheartening the Greeks and dealing the enemy a blow in his own waters".

Twelve hours later they had reached the northernmost limit of their foray between Valona and Brindisi, and were returning. The cruisers were in line ahead with *Nubian* to starboard and *Mohawk* to port. Coming towards them was an Italian convoy; four merchant ships escorted by *Nicola Fabrizi* (to port) and *Ramb III* (to starboard). *Ramb III* was a 3,667-ton auxiliary cruiser, while *Nicola Fabrizi* was a 650-ton torpedo boat whose armament included four 4in guns.

The two forces passed each other port to port. *Mohawk*'s guns opened the action at 0125, scoring one hit on *Ramb III* (identified as a torpedo boat). She turned away into the darkness on the far side of the convoy. *Nicola Fabrizi* (identified as a destroyer) was close ahead, and *Mohawk*'s fourth salvo hit her. She circled, trying to lay a smoke-screen across the bows of the convoy. Now *Mohawk* was firing at the second merchant ship, then the fourth merchant ship. *Nubian* had joined up astern and the two Tribals were past the convoy.

Astern of them, *Orion*, *Ajax* and *Sydney* were systematically destroying the convoy. *Orion* fired 4in and 4in starshell at *Ramb III*, then 6in and two torpedoes at the third merchantman. She was seen to be on fire and sinking so *Orion* shifted targets to the fourth merchant vessel. Hit by gunfire and a torpedo she was soon settling by the stern. *Ajax* missed *Nicola Fabrizi* as the torpedo boat turned through the smokescreen, but set one merchant ship on fire and hit another. *Sydney* set the first merchantman ablaze, fired at the third and *Nicola Fabrizi*, and then at every target as it came on.

By 0200, the action was over and the British ships were heading south-east at 28 knots. One merchant ship had been seen to sink, two were on fire and sinking, and the fourth was on fire, but making for Valona. Both escorts had been damaged. It had been difficult to see the results of the action because of the enemy's smokescreens and the flashes from the British guns. In fact, the convoy had been wiped out. Three freighters – *Antonio Locatelli* (5,691 tons), *Capo Vado* (4,391 tons) and *Premuda* (4,427 tons) – and a 2,429-ton passenger ship (*Catalani*) had all been sunk.

At midday the force rejoined the C-in-C and learned of the other success that night. Swordfish from *Illustrious* had immobilised three Italian battleships at Taranto. The Fleet returned to Alexandria on 14th November.

Illustrious followed up this operation with an air strike against Rhodes. The destroyers screened her during this sweep which helped to cover the first through passage of a merchant convoy from Gibraltar to Egypt. Force H fought an inconclusive action off Cape Spartivento in Sardinia, but otherwise bombers provided the only Italian interference.

For a brief period there was another of those momentary lulls, so vital to the efficiency of the fleet. It was ended on 8/9th December, when the Western Desert Force began a spectacular advance along the African shore. The Royal Navy kept pace with them, usually ships of the Inshore Squadron who supplied the Army's wants and shelled Italian positions. Sometimes the Fleet vessels joined in as on 11/12th December when the 14th DF accompanied *Terror* in shelling Sollum. A series of sweeps showed

that the Italian battlefleet was in no state to interfere, so Admiral Cunningham took advantage of the enemy's preoccupation with the land campaign to revictual Malta. Then on 3rd January 1941 *Warspite*, *Valiant* and *Barham* shelled Bardia prior to its assault and capture.

At 0500 on 7th January the battlefleet again sailed from Alexandria to cover a complicated movement of convoys to and from Greece and Malta, including the main Excess convoy which was being passed right through the Mediterranean. There were several groups of warships, Force A comprising *Warspite*, *Valiant*, *Illustrious*, *Jervis*, *Nubian*, *Mohawk*, *Dainty*, *Greyhound*, *Gallant* and *Griffin*.

They were shadowed by aircraft for almost the whole day and sighted five floating mines. After fuelling at Suda Bay on 8th January, and being joined by other warships, they headed towards the Excess troop convoy west of Malta.

Rendezvous was effected at 0810 on 10th January, just as the convoy's escort finished driving off an attack by Italian destroyers and torpedo boats. Twenty-four minutes later *Gallant* hit a mine and her bows were blown right off. *Mohawk* took her in tow, making five knots towards Malta, protected by *Bonaventure*, *Gloucester*, *Southampton*, *Griffin* and *Diamond*. Now a new element broke upon the Mediterranean scene – German Ju87 Stuka divebombers. Forewarned by *Bonaventure*'s latest radar, the force drove off their attackers, although *Southampton* was damaged by a nearmiss. *Valiant*'s radar performed a similar service for Force A, but her equipment was older. The raid followed an attack by torpedo-bombers, and the Stukas were determined to get the most important ship in the Mediterranean. *Warspite* and *Valiant* were hit, but the weight of the attack fell upon the carrier *Illustrious*. Sorely crippled she left the Fleet and limped into Malta.

The next day divebombing was resumed. *Nubian* and *Juno*, running short of fuel because of so much high-speed manoeuvring, left Force A and joined the Excess convoy, proceeding at a more economical pace. Meanwhile, *Mohawk* had succeeded in towing *Gallant* into Malta.

She fuelled and left with *Griffin* to help *Gloucester* and *Southampton*. The two cruisers had been escorting an eastbound convoy of merchant ships out of Malta when they were found by the Stukas. Both were hit and uncontrollable fires were soon raging aboard *Southampton*. Nothing could be done with her. Survivors were picked up and at 1900 she was torpedoed and sunk by *Gloucester* and *Orion*. These two cruisers plus *Mohawk* and *Griffin* then rejoined the C-in-C and arrived at Suda Bay to fuel on 12th January. *Nubian* arrived at Piraeus the same day with her convoy. The Mediterranean Fleet returned to Alexandria, damaged but without having lost a single merchant ship to the enemy.

Meanwhile the Army had been advancing along the coast of North Africa. The 14th DF covered the Inshore Squadron's bombardment of Tobruk on 19/20th January. They were also prepared to intercept the armoured cruiser *San Giorgio*, but this old ship was being used as a floating battery in Tobruk harbour. Already badly damaged, she was finally scuttled when the port was overrun on 22nd January.

The 14th DF and other ships of the Mediterranean Fleet then screened *Illustrious*'

escape from Malta. The carrier, together with a couple of empty merchantmen, arrived safely at Alexandria on 25th January.

The Army reached El Agheila on 9th February. Forces were then redeployed to meet new problems in the Middle East. The Navy carried out sweeps and escorted convoys connected with these movements.

The 14th DF once fired at some E-boats they encountered, but the period was fairly quiet. They had time to clean their boilers and *Nubian* even had a fortnight's refit.

On 5th March, however, British troops began to be moved to Greece, the destroyers being engaged in convoy escorts. The Italians had enough problems on their Greek Front without British military intervention and it was therefore to be expected that they would try to interfere with this traffic.

Perhaps it was not too great a surprise when a Sunderland sighted a group of Italian cruisers heading east. Admiral Cunningham went ashore ostensibly for a weekend's golf to deceive the Japanese Consul at Alexandria. He was believed to be relaying information to the enemy, but in the event his suspicions were not aroused. All Greek and Cretan convoys were diverted so that the Italians would find no targets. After dark Admiral Cunningham returned and Force A (*Warspite*, *Valiant*, *Barham*, *Formidable*, *Jervis*, *Nubian*, *Mohawk* and *Janus* and the 10th DF) sailed from Alexandria at 1900 on 27th March.

Next morning at 0927, *Valiant* (with *Nubian* and *Mohawk* following her movements) was ordered to proceed independently and support Vice-Admiral (Light Forces) in danger of being overwhelmed by Italian cruisers. The order was cancelled when the Italians turned away and *Valiant* stayed with the flagship, now chasing the Italian force. *Formidable* flew off a series of air strikes to try to slow the Italians down and aircraft from Crete joined in. At 1651, *Nubian* and *Mohawk* were sent ahead of Force A to act as visual signalling links between Admiral Cunningham in *Warspite* and Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell in *Orion*. As dusk fell, the two Tribals rejoined the 14th DF, and took up position on *Warspite*'s starboard bow.

It was known that *Vittorio Veneto* had been hit and stopped and the 14th DF planned to pass her and attack from ahead when she was found. However, the battleship had got under way again, although the Italian force had already suffered a serious blow.

The Tribals sighted a number of ships at about 2200. They were in fact Italian cruisers, but they were so close and steering such a confident course, it was assumed they must be friendly – an illusion dispelled twenty-eight minutes later when British 15in guns blasted the enemy ships at point-blank range. As the flashes and flames died away, the British destroyers searched the night sea for *Vittorio Veneto* and any other crippled enemy warships. At 0240, the 14th DF investigated the burning cruiser *Zara*. *Jervis* hastened her end with torpedoes and the destroyers picked up survivors without lowering boats. Ten minutes later they set off towards a red-and-white flare. Presently they met *Havock*. Beyond loomed a long dark shape – the heavy cruiser *Pola*.

Torpedoed in the dusk air attack, she had stopped and her crew had started to

abandon ship. Damage control parties had found that she was not in danger of sinking, but she had 4,000 tons of water on board. They could not get the engines going and many personnel had been affected by poisonous fumes in the engine and boiler rooms. Meanwhile, most of those in the water had reboarded the cruiser. Their sodden clothing was stripped off, they were rubbed down and given alcohol to warm them up. *Pola* lay dead, no power and no warmth, her crew waiting for help from their returning squadron.

Overwhelmed by 15in gunfire, their comrades did not come. Instead *Pola* was shelled briefly by *Havock* (starting a small fire) and then at 0325, *Jervis* came alongside.

A boarding party found the cruiser in a sorry state, but she was still afloat. Flooded, she now displaced over 18,000 tons – could she be towed back to Alexandria? Captain Mack thought so.

Submarines and small vessels of all navies changed hands during the war and some were captured at sea, but a heavy cruiser (with eight 8in, twelve 3.9in, eight 37mm and eight 13.2mm guns), taken on the high seas . . . the very words had a triumphant ring. But what could be done with her afterwards? With no ammunition, spares or drawings, how could she be kept in service? It was difficult enough maintaining small ex-enemy vessels. A heavy cruiser would waste too much time and effort. Admiral Cunningham did not relish exposing his Fleet to prolonged German air attacks for the sake of an empty flamboyant gesture. The 14th DF was ordered to sink *Pola*.

Her crew was given ten minutes to abandon ship. Some were taken aboard *Jervis* while others clambered up rope ladders on the other destroyers. At 0340 *Jervis* cast off, moved away and fired one torpedo into *Pola*. The big cruiser started settling, but so slowly. At 0403, *Nubian* fired a torpedo. *Pola* blew up and sank.

By 0700 all forces had rejoined the C-in-C, and the Fleet returned to the area of the battle to search for Italian survivors. The destroyers rescued another 160 and left at 1100. An afternoon attack by twelve Ju88s was broken up by *Formidable*'s fighters. All ships arrived safely at Alexandria at 1730. The Battle of Matapan had been a decisive victory.

But there was no rest for the 14th DF. From 1st to 6th April, they escorted a Piraeus-bound convoy. They were bombed off Crete, the merchant ship *Northern Prince* being sunk and *Devis* set on fire. *Nubian*'s guns finished off the derelict *Homefield*, abandoned after a previous attack. The destroyers returned immediately to Alexandria. They thus missed the beginning of the German invasion of Greece, but their services were required elsewhere.

In February, the Afrika Korps had landed in Libya. At the end of March they began their offensive and by 6th April were crossing Cyrenaica. Their success was due to the withdrawal of British forces to other theatres, the leadership of General Rommel, and the supplies and reinforcements reaching him across the Mediterranean. This last could be stopped. The 14th DF was ordered to do the job.

On 10/11th April, *Jervis*, *Janus*, *Nubian* and *Mohawk* arrived at Malta to act as a night striking force. Two night sweeps revealed nothing, but on the afternoon of

15th April, air reconnaissance located a Tripoli-bound convoy off Cape Bon. The 1,590-ton *Sabaudia* was laden with munitions, while the German merchantmen *Adana* (4,205 tons), *Aegina* (2,447 tons), *Arta* (2,452 tons) and *Iserlohn* (3,704 tons), were crammed with troops and vehicles. They were escorted by *Luca Tarigo* (1,943 tons and six 4.7in guns), *Baleno* and *Lampo* (both of 1,238 tons and with four 4.7in guns). All three Italian destroyers carried powerful automatic and torpedo armaments.

The 14th DF left Malta at dusk, searching close to the North African coast. It so happened that they passed the convoy without either group seeing the other. At 0158, they turned back and saw the convoy six miles away, silhouetted against the moon. *Jervis*, *Janus*, *Nubian* and *Mohawk* overtook the convoy at 2,400 yards and opened fire just after 0210.

Jervis and *Janus* hit *Lampo* with their 4.7in and 2pdr guns. *Lampo* managed to get off three salvoes and all her torpedoes. Ablaze, she drifted onto the Kerkenah Bank and sank. *Baleno*, her bridge wrecked by *Nubian*'s guns, lurched away to capsize and sink later. *Nubian* then fired at the rear merchantman, who was also hit by *Janus* and *Mohawk*. Their target caught fire and her stern blew up. *Nubian* and *Janus* hit the next in line and then the third merchant ship felt *Nubian*'s shells.

Turning back from the head of the convoy, *Luca Tarigo* tried to get between her charges and their assailants. She was hit under the bridge by the combined gunfire of all the British destroyers, while *Jervis* and *Janus* also fired torpedoes at her as they turned around the head of the convoy to complete its annihilation. Although stopped and sinking, *Luca Tarigo* got off three torpedoes in *Mohawk*'s direction.

Smoke, explosions, shellsplashes, burning ships and racing torpedoes confused the night sea. *Mohawk*, at the stern of the flotilla, had reserved her fire for ships not being engaged by the other destroyers. At 0230 she evaded the ramming bow of the leading merchantman, turned to starboard and opened fire at her, just as a torpedo exploded abreast 'Y' mounting on the starboard side.

The whole of the stern from the superstructure aft was blown away, and the ship was awash as far as 'X' mounting. All 'Y' guns' crews and supply parties were killed except one man who was wearing a cork lifebelt and was found floating some distance away. 'X' mounting was also out of action, but 'A' and 'B' guns continued firing and set the leading merchant ship on fire. *Mohawk* stopped, but five minutes later the engineer officer reported that the propellers and shafts seemed alright and he would try to move the ship.

Instantly a second torpedo arrived, hitting the portside of the bulkhead between No. 2 and 3 boiler rooms. No. 3 boiler burst, scalding people on deck. The centre line of the upper deck split open, plunging all standing on the spot into the bottom of the ship. The torpedo-tubes fell into the engine room, crushing most of the watch below.

Immediately *Mohawk* was going down. All hands were called on deck. Within a minute she was listing heavily to port, rolling over until she lay on her side. There was no time to launch boats, but six carleys floated clear. Most of the crew were left in the water as *Mohawk* sank. Her stern touched the bottom with her fo'c'sle above the

surface. A *Mohawk* signalman flashed to *Nubian* who turned to pick up survivors from the water. *Jervis* took two from *Mohawk*'s fo'c'sle. *Janus* was ordered to sink her and put four 4.7in shells into the Tribal's fo'c'sle. Her buoyancy destroyed, *Mohawk* slipped beneath the surface. 41 men were lost with her.

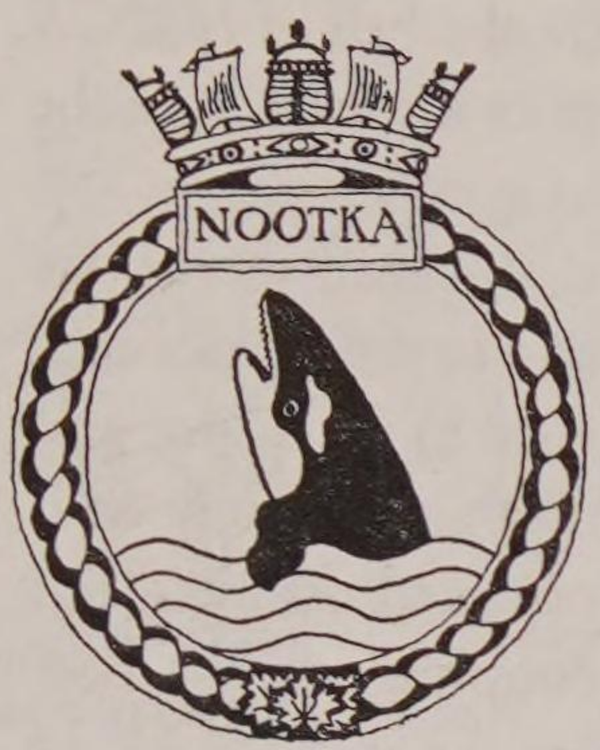
Meanwhile, the action was still going on. One after the other the enemy ships blew up, were sunk or beached. Even an old suspicious-looking wreck on the Kerkenah Banks received a few shells from *Nubian* and was set on fire. By 0403, the battle was over. The convoy had been destroyed although *Lampo* was later salvaged, while *Arta* was finally demolished by *Upholder*. The Afrika Korps had lost 350 troops, 300 vehicles and 3,500 tons of stores and ammunition – their most serious loss during the whole of their initial build up.

Commanding Officers

Cdr R. F. Jolly, RN 12th July 1938 – 16th October 1939.
Cdr J. W. M. Eaton, RN 19th October 1939 – 16th April 1941.

Pennant Numbers

L31 July 1938 – December 1938
F31 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G31 Autumn 1940 – April 1941



HMCS Nootka

Second of name

Builders: Halifax Shipyards
Engined by: John Inglis, Halifax
Ordered: June 1941
Laid Down: 20th May 1942
Launched: 26th April 1944 (by Miss Rita Gallant)
Commissioned: 7th August 1946

A NOOTKA was already in service with the RCN when the Tribal was laid down. The first of the name was a 696-ton Modified Basset-class coal-burning trawler, named after Nootka Sound in British Columbia, home of the Nootka Indians. Early in 1943, King George VI approved the name *Nootka* for the new Tribal and accordingly the trawler was renamed *Nanoose*. She was eventually sold and became a mercantile tug.

It seemed as though *Nootka*'s life would always be a peaceful one of exercises and cruises. There was a certain number of routine escorts and *Nootka* was involved in such work even before she had finished her working-up. In August 1946 she helped *Micmac* escort the liner *Mauretania* taking Field-Marshal Montgomery to Halifax. For almost the whole of October, *Nootka* acted as *Warrior*'s plane guard during Atlantic Exercises. On 5th November, *Warrior* and *Nootka* again left Halifax, but the two ships parted company when approaching the Panama Canal. *Warrior* passed through into the Pacific and thence to Esquimalt for the winter, while *Nootka* spent a week at Bermuda, returning to Halifax on 28th November for docking and leave.

Micmac, *Nootka* and *Warrior* exercised and cruised in the Caribbean during early 1947. The next series of exercises took place in April and May. *Warrior*, *Nootka*, *Sheffield*, *Kenya*, *Sparrow*, *Snipe* and *Padstow Bay* practised a number of tactical manoeuvres and also played off a host of sporting fixtures against each other.

Nootka's next assignment, following a refit at Halifax, was also in a lighter vein. She passed through the Gut of Canso to Quebec, where, on 24th June, a party was landed to march from Levis to Lauzon – a procession celebrating the 300th Anniversary of the arrival of Guillaume Couture, the first settler in the area. It was not entirely successful as the procession started two hours late and somehow got split up. Still, the ceremonies continued the next day and on the 26th *Nootka* took Mr Brooke Claxton (Minister of National Defence) and a party of pressmen back to Montreal. *Nootka* arrived back at Halifax on 3rd July.

A fortnight later *Nootka* was hurrying out of harbour in response to a distress call from the French liner *De Grasse*. On 19th July, *Nootka*'s whaler took across two medical officers, plasma and equipment to treat a woman who was seriously ill.

Haida and *Nootka* spent some time exercising with US submarines off Rhode Island, and accompanied *New Liskeard* and *Portage* to Baddeck to present the bell of *HMCS Baddeck* to the town. *Haida* and *Nootka* remained exercising together for the rest of the year and both shared in Operation Scuppered when U-190 was sunk.

December and January were taken up with a refit at Halifax and then there were more exercises and visits along the eastern seaboard of America and in the Caribbean. The autumn of 1948 saw *Magnificent*, *Haida* and *Nootka* on a cruise to Labrador and Hudson Bay. Next spring the three ships were in the Caribbean exercising with *Athabaskan* and the other west coast vessels. A minor calamity occurred on 1st April 1949 when *Nootka* was refuelling at sea. The quick release coupling on the hose released itself and a fountain of high pressure oil sprayed all over the ship "from the 293 aerial to the waterline including, happily, the Chief Stoker and the Engineer Officer". There was so much of it to clean up that *Nootka* used up all her cotton waste and had to get more from *Magnificent*. Another mishap in June was more serious. *Magnificent* ran aground and *Nootka* and *Haida* had to help her off. After more exercises and visits *Nootka* paid off on 15th August.

During her conversion to an escort destroyer *Nootka*'s 4.7in guns were replaced with 4in mountings by February 1950. It was then decided that she should be further altered. 'Y' mounting was removed altogether and two triple-barrelled squid Mk. IV antisubmarine mountings installed. Her internal arrangements had to be adapted to accommodate the relevant equipment and personnel. The new weapons were tested in September and October, working-up being interrupted on 18th September when *Nootka* went out ninety miles to bring back an injured man from a trawler. Then *Nootka* went back into dock for more alterations to her armament when two boffin gun-mountings were fitted. These were single 40mm bofors guns on a twin 20mm oerlikon powered-mounting. This work complete, *Nootka* sailed from Halifax on 25th November bound for Korean waters.

A severe gale slowed her to seven knots and caused damage which had to be repaired at Rodman Navy Yard, Balboa, after passing through the Panama Canal. There were a number of other calls in the Pacific, and a man was lost overboard. She arrived at Sasebo on 14th January 1951.

Nootka fired her first shot in anger on 25th January, when she and *Cayuga* silenced enemy guns on Wolmi-do. The two Tribals were engaged on inshore patrols around Inchon and carrier screening off the west coast. During this latter work, *Nootka* entered the Yellow Sea Refuelling Stakes, being champion UN destroyer for a short period.

On 9th April, *Nootka* was given a rather different assignment. A Mig-15 was reported to have crashed on Simni-do and its salvage would be a valuable acquisition. *Nootka* and *Comus* closed the island, but there was no sign of any wreckage. They reported to *Kenya* and then *Nootka* set off alone for the Chinnampo River, where another aircraft had crashed, this time a B29. They found the decomposed body of a Korean fisherman and then the wreckage of the B29. *Nootka* was trying to recover two bodies when seven unidentified jets appeared overhead. There had been recent

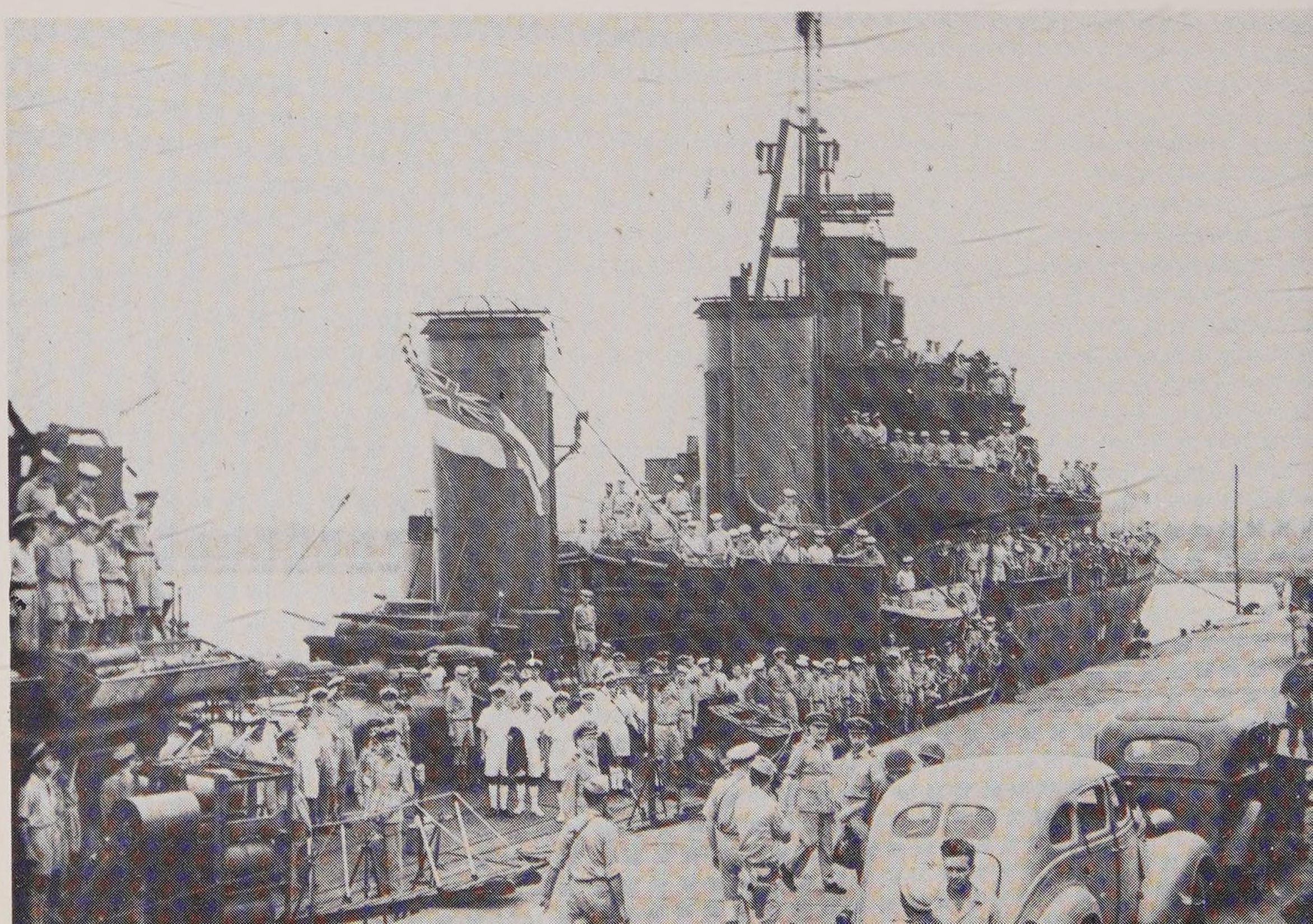
0530, 12th June 1945. *Eskimo*'s torpedo on its way – target *Kuroshio Maru.*
[*K. Newsom Davies – via Rear-Admiral E. N. Sinclair*

Top: Indian troops on *Eskimo*'s foc'sle, March 1945.
[*K. Newsom Davies – via Rear-Admiral E. N. Sinclair*

Right: Nubian leaves Malta, homeward bound from the East Indies on 6th November 1945. She displays all the later wartime alterations made to the four surviving original Tribals: Radar Types 285 on rangefinder-director and 293 on lattice foremast; twin 20mm oerlikons on bridge wings and after superstructure; single 40mm bofors amidships; and H/F-D/F aft. Note that 'X' mounting is normally trained forward. In the background is the battered hulk of the tanker *Ohio*.

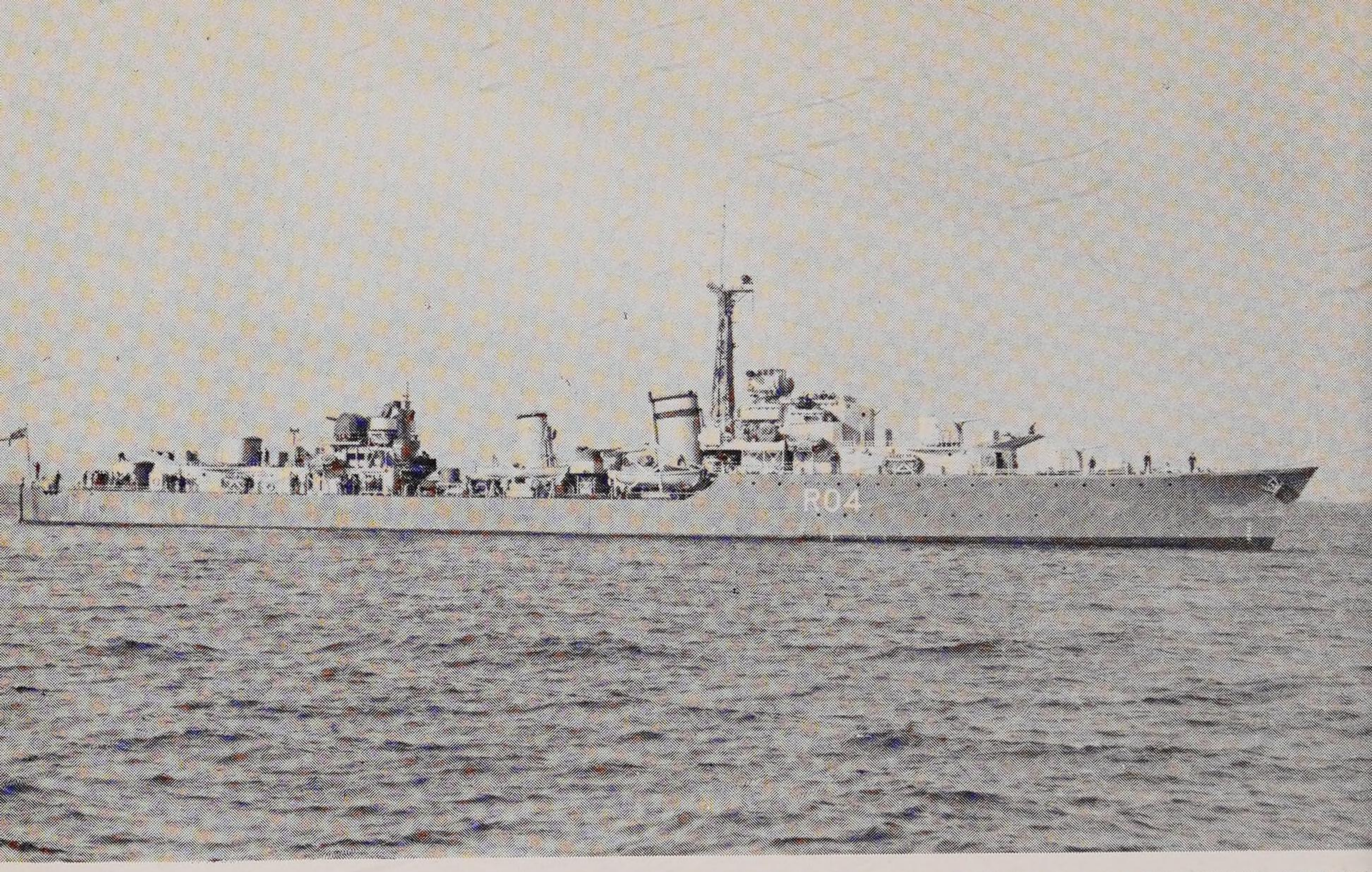
[*A. & J. Pavia*

Main throttle control in *Tartar*'s engine-room – a photograph taken in the East Indies Fleet in 1945. [*IWM*



Eskimo at Cape Town, November 1945. Note peacetime covers over depth-charges and '10' (for 10th DF) on forefunnel. *Roebuck* in background. [*Cay's Photos – via J. Ansell*

Left: Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser (C-in-C, British Pacific Fleet) goes ashore from *Warramunga* in Yokohama, September 1945. Note the 40mm guns, improved depth-charge reload gear and different type of life-rafts. [*IWM*



Proud holder of thirteen battle honours, *Nubian* ends her days as a target in Loch Striven.
[*A. & J. Pavia*

Top: Cayuga as Canadian West Coast destroyer leader in 1948. Both she and *Athabaskan* were completed with a radar-controlled director and four twin 4in mountings. The after superstructure (with twin 40mm mountings) also differed from earlier Tribals. Note the enclosed firing position on the torpedo-tubes. [*A. & J. Pavia*

Cordite smoke drifts from *Athabaskan* as she cleaves calm water off Taechon on 16th August 1950. She is now carrying squid aft and two single bofors amidships.

[*DND (Canada)*

Top: Bataan as leader of the 10th DF Destroyer Squadron at Sydney in 1949.

[*A. & J. Pavia*

The West Coast of Korea, 16th August 1950. A distant *Athabaskan* moves away after firing twenty-five 4in shells at a suspected Communist observation post in Taechon.

[*DND (Canada)*

Athabaskan's boat backs away from a mine after attaching a demolition charge. Kunsan Harbour, 27th September 1950. [*DND (Canada)*

Right: Refugee junks display ROK flags as they approach *Cayuga* at Chinnampo on 5th December 1950. [*DND (Canada)*

Bottom right: Chinnampo in flames, 5/6th December 1950. [*DND (Canada)*

Lieutentant-Commander Madgwick of *Huron* lays a wreath over the resting-place of the first *Athabaskan,* 28th October 1950. [*DND (Canada)*

Top: A plotting exercise in *Huron*'s operations room during her European cruise in October 1950. [*DND (Canada)*

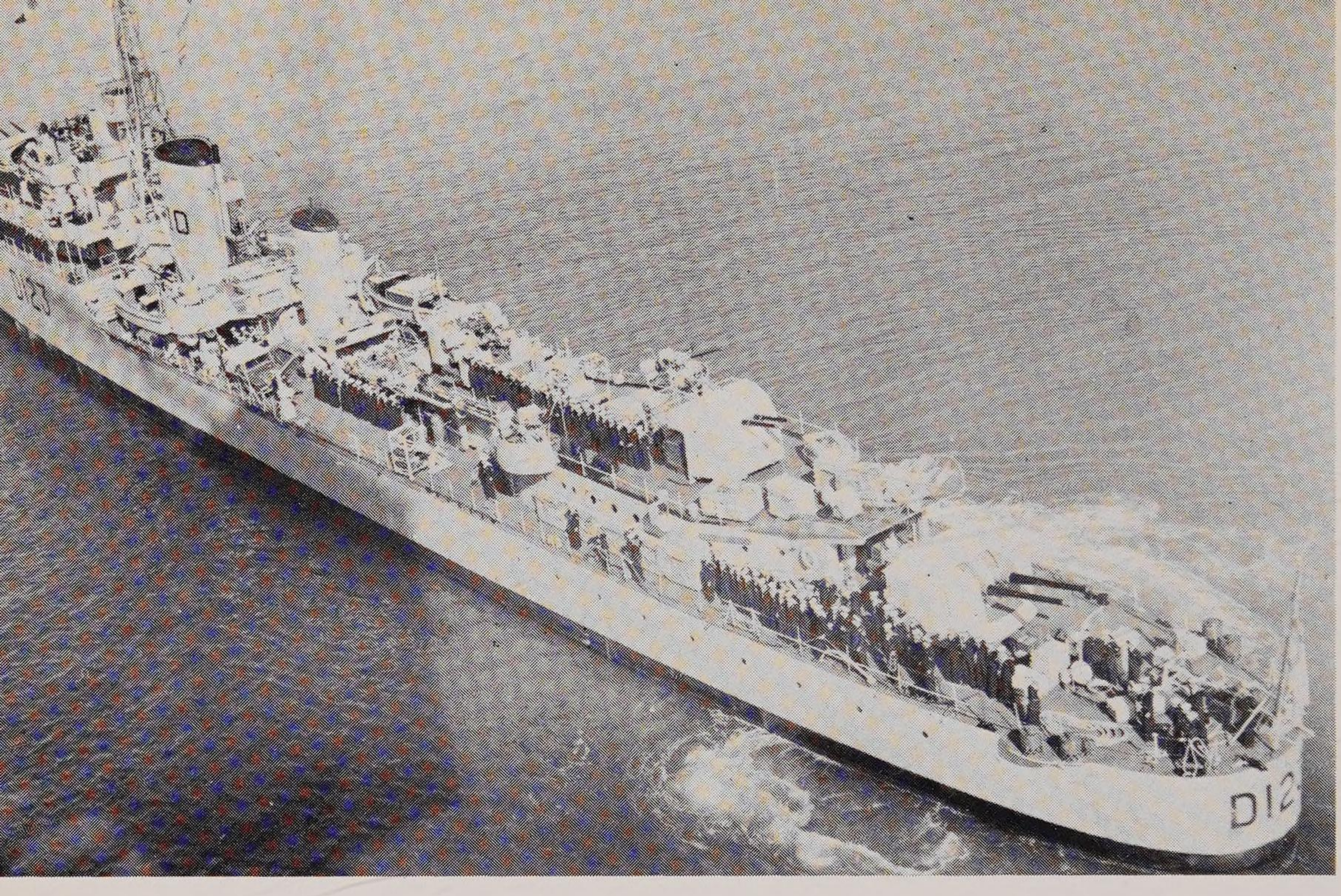
Micmac leaving Malta on 13th September 1951. She has a triple-barrelled squid in 'A' position and quadruple 40mm guns on 'B' mounting. [*A. & J. Pavia*

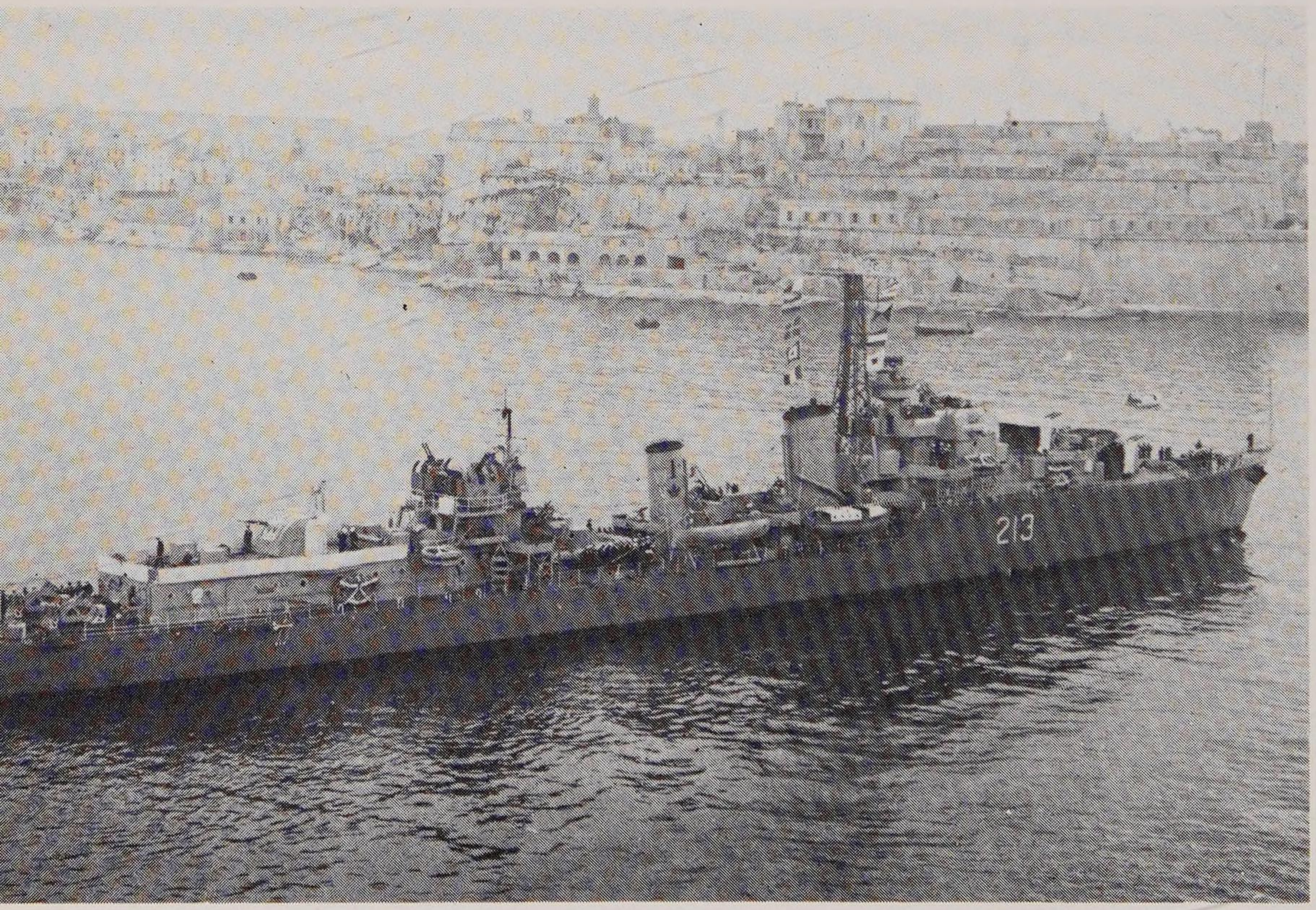
Top: Micmac takes *Gilbert Jr* in tow in the Caribbean on 3rd April 1951.

[*DND (Canada)*

Top: Reloading a torpedo after exercises off Korea. *Warramunga*, July 1952. [*IWM*

Nootka and *Ocean* replenishing from *Wave Prince* off the West Coast of Korea, August 1952. [*IWM*





Nootka at Malta, 5th December 1952, with twin 40mm guns on the after superstructure.
[*A. & J. Pavia*

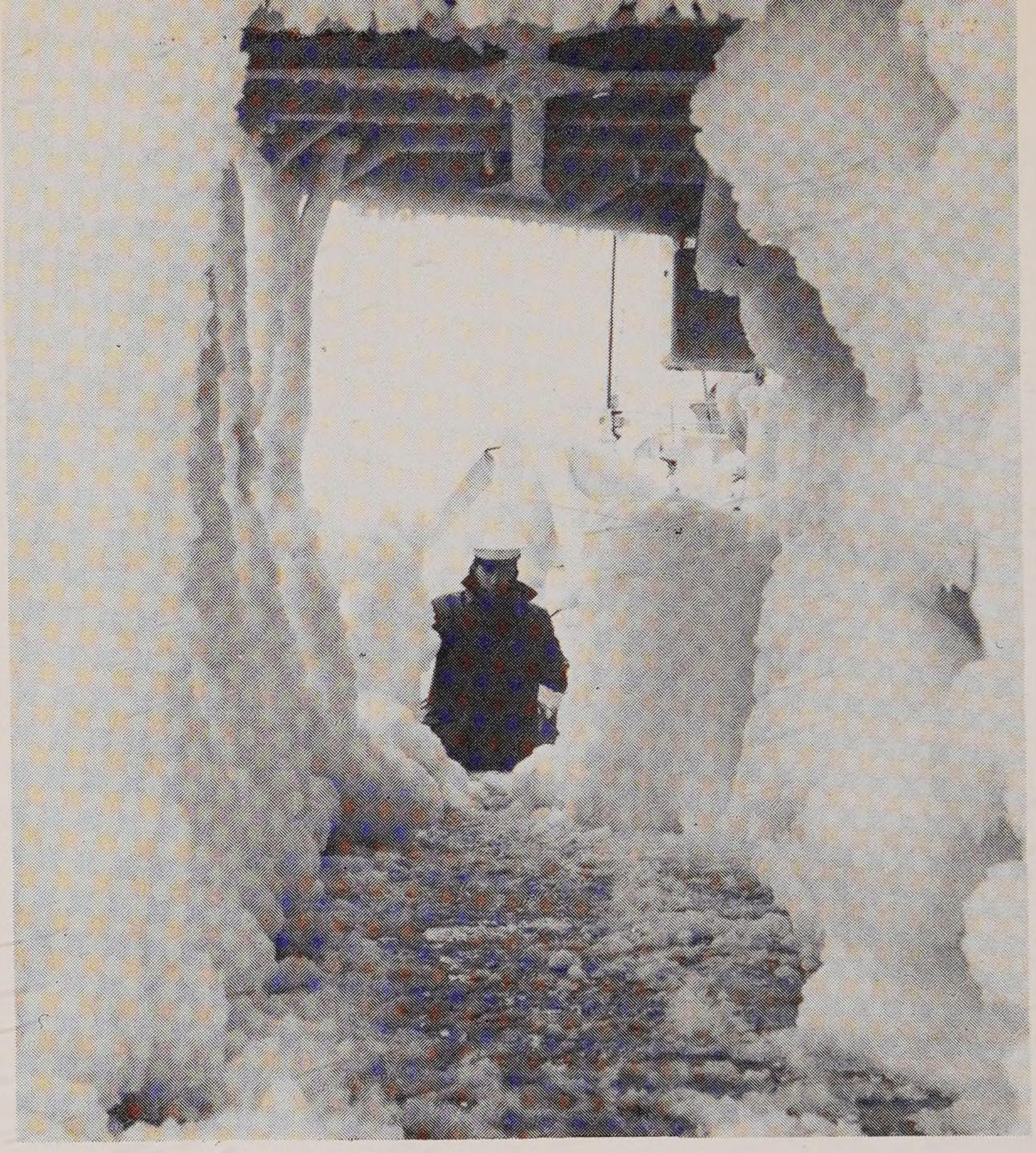
Top: Warramunga comes home from Korea, 15th November 1952. Note that she is carrying her own Land-Rover. [*L. J. Ball – via A. & J. Pavia*

Passing through the Kiel Canal in October 1956, *Micmac* displays the final appearance of the RCN Tribals. [*C. Jeske Schiffsfotos – via A. & J. Pavia*

Top: Iroquois at Malta on 27th January 1954 on her way home from Korea. She is carrying two twin 4in mountings forward, single 40mm guns amidships and aft, twin 3in/50 guns on the after superstructure and two triple-barrelled squid right aft. She also has a short lattice foremast and a catwalk over the torpedo-tubes. Note the Maple Leaf on the afterfunnel. [*A. & J. Pavia*

A sunlit sea off Hong Kong in September 1954. Left to right: *Comus*, *Warrior*, *Birmingham*, *Concord* and *Cockade* with *Arunta* beyond. [*IWM*

Athabaskan edges in towards the wreck of the tanker *Amphialos*, 1st March 1964.
[*DND (Canada)*



Nootka after an Atlantic patrol in March 1961. [*DND (Canada)*

Haida arrives at Pier Six, Toronto, 25th August 1964.
[*DND (Canada)*

indications that the Communists might be about to launch an air offensive against the UN blockading ships. Accordingly *Nootka* stood out to get some sea-room, but the attack did not come. In fact, the Communists never did develop effective anti-shipping strikes although the danger was always there. *Nootka* did not return until her combat air patrol rejoined later in the day, and she could not then relocate the B29 debris.

The rest of the patrol, which ended on the 24th, was fairly quiet. There was one shore bombardment and once *Nootka* steamed through a fleet of friendly fishing junks in thick fog. Fifty-two radar contacts showed on the screen and Commander Fraser-Harris later commented that it was an "interesting adventure not recommended to those who wish to retain either their ship or their hair".

A Communist offensive had begun on 22nd April, coming southwards during *Nootka*'s next period at sea. She left off carrier screening and moved inshore to intercept junks which were believed to be supplying Communist forces along the coast. Her radar located nine fishing-boats in a prohibited area off the Yalu River on 13/14th May. In thick fog, *Nootka*'s motor-boat cut out two junks and five sampans, their occupants sleeping off an opium-smoking session. The Chinese were taken on board and their boats towed away, leaving the two remaining crews to puzzle out their comrades' disappearance when they awoke at dawn. Unfortunately the craft towed behind *Nootka* foundered en route to Inchon, where the still dazed fishermen were handed over to the shore authorities.

Although the Communist armies had advanced some distance south, the UN decided to garrison some off-shore islands with ROK Marines. They would act as bases for minesweeping, guerrilla raids, search and rescue, and radar and radio installations. For example, Wonsan on the east coast was captured by the Communists, but some islands in the harbour remained in UN hands. The supply and defence of these islands was known as the Siege of Wonsan.

Nootka arrived off the east coast on 21st May. For the next two days and a night, she ranged up and down the coast, bombarding boxcars and whatever targets of opportunity presented themselves along the railway. At midday on 23rd May, the Nootkas took advantage of thick coastal fog to have a close look at the railway and see if it was still operational. A motor-cutter towed the captain's skiff close in, but before the landing party could dash ashore, a group of North Korean riflemen opened fire from the cliffs. Out of their element, the landing party withdrew, having inflicted three casualties and proved that the enemy considered the railway worth defending. As soon as they were clear of the beach *Nootka* bombarded the shore blindly. Presently the fog cleared and 4in shells were directed against a lookout post, a pillbox and a bridge.

During the next couple of days *Nootka* bombarded Chongjin and other targets, her fire sometimes being directed by Corsairs. She also had a go at the Rubber Bridge, so called because shells seemed to bounce off it, and whatever damage was done was soon repaired.

On 26th May, therefore, *Nootka* carried out Operation Squeegee against the Rubber

Bridge. She lowered her two motor-cutters with an improvised 'A' sweep rigged between them. *Nootka* covered them by shelling any signs of activity on the shore and by firing squid bombs ahead of the boats to detonate any ground-effect mines. Her sonar was also used to check the channel. *Nootka* and *Stickell* then got as close to the shore as possible and opened fire at a range of one mile. Soldiers on the beach were dispersed and driven into a tunnel which was then blocked. Pillboxes, observation posts, freight cars, a viaduct and three villages were hit. The Rubber Bridge was so badly damaged and so frequently blasted over the next few days by *Stickell* (using *Nootka*'s swept-channel) that the North Koreans gave up trying to repair it and filled in the ravine. As she left the area *Nootka* hoisted in her cutters, who had been busy collecting fresh fish killed by the squid explosions.

Further bombardments of Chongjin, Songjin and the railway followed, interspersed with replenishment off Wonsan. *Nootka* also searched for a man lost from *USS Burlington*, carried out a number of reconnaissance and ferry missions and screened *Manchester* and *Los Angeles* when they shelled the front-line south of Wonsan. On 4th June, *Nootka* was relieved by *Sioux* and went to Kure for docking and leave.

For *Nootka*'s next spell of duty, she was given the job of 'Flycatcher' on the west coast. This entailed the supervision of all junk traffic off Chodo, the monotony of long periods at anchor being broken by a single bombardment of an enemy-occupied village.

Lieutenant-Commander Richardson took *Nootka* on her last patrol of this Korean tour as Commander Fraser-Harris had to visit Hong Kong because of an enquiry into *Sioux*'s superheater tubes. Most of the time *Nootka* screened carriers off the west coast, spending the nights off Taechong-do.

On 20th July, *Nootka* left Yokosuka calling at the Aleutians for mail and fuel. Off Vancouver she ran into thick fog and picked up two radar contacts very close. She altered course to pass between them and stopped as soon as they were identified as the tug *Island Sovereign* and a raft of logs. The long towing wire had just fouled *Nootka*'s sonar dome, but it cleared when the tug circled the destroyer while *Nootka* went slow astern. She arrived at Esquimalt later that day (31st July) and divers checked to make sure that no damage had been done. They did find that the port propeller and a few neighbouring plates needed some attention, so *Nootka* was drydocked. It was soon done and *Nootka* was on her way again on 4th August 1951, arriving at Halifax on 21st August.

Although *Nootka*'s refit was completed on 17th November, trials, exercises, icy gales and trouble with the port-side main-overboard discharge-pipe took up her time until 30th December. She arrived back at Sasebo via the Panama Canal on 12th February 1952.

Nootka's February patrols off the west coast of Korea were more of a fight against the weather than a battle against the enemy. There were several bombardments of enemy-held villages, but most time inshore was spent dodging ice-floes which could block cooling system inlets in the hull, although they were not big enough to endanger

the ship. On 17th February her whaler was stove in when she and the *RFA Wave Baron* rolled together in a trough during refuelling. She also lost her anchor when the cable parted only two days after the practice of buoying the anchor had been discontinued on advice from higher UN command.

From 23rd February to 25th March, *Nootka* screened carriers and carried out night patrols off Pengyongdo. There were of course periods of replenishment in Japan. while on 27th March *Nootka* began a fortnight's support of guerrillas on islands in the Haeju-man. She moved about by day and anchored at night, firing starshell to illuminate the mudflats and waters across which attacking troops would have to come. Twice enemy soldiers were dispersed and *Nootka*'s 4in and 40mm guns also accounted for two beached junks, several coastal trenchworks and various other targets. She also sent a party ashore on Mu-do to inspect the defences and treat wounded guerrillas and typhoid cases. On the last day she laid a line of eight oil-drums to mark the boundary of the permitted fishing area.

On 17/18th April, at the beginning of her next patrol, *Nootka* was fired on by both sides during a night exchange between Kirin-do and the mainland. This was the only excitement in a patrol which was mainly concerned with screening *Glory* until the end of the month. Carrier escort, inshore patrols, and the bombardment of troop billets were shown to Commodore Hibbard (Canada's Chief of Naval Personnel) when he spent some time aboard *Nootka* in May.

Nootka moved round to the east coast on 28th May, relieving *Warramunga* off Yang-do. She shelled Songjin, the railway and other targets of opportunity. On 30th May she arrived off Chongjin with *John W. Thomason* to engage any activity there. *Nootka* opened fire at a junk. The third ranging shot was in the air when an enemy battery of eight guns opened fire. In the first salvo, three shells landed thirty yards away on the port side, two ten yards ahead on the starboard bow and one fifty yards astern. Commander Steele ordered "Full ahead. Hard a'starboard", and as *Nootka* heeled over the second salvo landed so close under the flair of the port bow that it could not be seen from the bridge. Water fountained over the bridge and jagged steel splinters flew across the deck. The third salvo was already on its way as the first landed. *Nootka* tried to lay a smokescreen, but her after funnel caught fire and every time her guns fired, flames and sparks belched out.

This may have given the enemy artillerymen the impression that they were hitting, for the salvoes kept perfect step, marching along beside *Nootka*. Being "loth to upset so amicable an arrangement" *Nootka* steadied on a disengaging course until out of range at 9,000 yards. Reversing course in a fog bank, *Nootka* emerged with all her guns firing at the offending battery at 11,000 yards, but it did not reply again.

Nootka started 31st May with a dawn bombardment of the positions around the inner harbour at Songjin. Later in the day she joined *Endicott* in shelling a bridge over a river, various railway targets and sundry enemy positions near Chongjin. This sort of activity was repeated every day for the next week. Every so often they ammunitioned from a US supply ship off Wonsan, and occasionally *Nootka* was fired at by shore batteries.

While returning to Wonsan, *Nootka* encountered nine sampans fishing the bay between Yongdae-gap and Yohae-jin. Fishing was allowed close inshore, but blockade regulations prohibited fishing a long way offshore, where Communist agents might observe UN movements. *Nootka* therefore fired two shells, the second sinking one of the craft. She then lowered her boats to capture another of the sampans and its three occupants. The other fishing-boats reached Yohae-jin and were dragged up amongst the houses. The three fishermen were handed over to the ROK forces and there were no more breaches of the blockade regulations in that area.

Nootka was relieved by *Constance* on 9th June, and sailed for Sasebo, taking a number of passengers with her. She then departed for two weeks' rest and recreation at Hong Kong.

Everything was fairly quiet at first when *Nootka* returned to the west coast; just the routine carrier screening and inshore patrols. Then on 20th July, *Nootka* moved into the Haeju-man. At dawn the next day, *Nootka* treated a guerrilla, injured when his junk was shelled by Communist shore batteries. On the 22nd and 23rd, *Nootka* shelled Mu-do. Next day plans were prepared to land guerrillas on the peninsula opposite Haeju, drawing enemy troops into open country where they could be eliminated by naval gunfire and air strikes. *Nootka* was to provide inshore gunfire support, navigational expertise and radio communications.

The operation should have begun at 2130, but the two motor-junks acting as assault tugs went off to their base for supplies. The ROK AMC302 therefore took the assault junks in tow in a long line about midnight. As they left, a boarding party from *Nootka* intercepted an unidentified junk, capturing five heavily-armed guerrillas. They were put under guard in the destroyer until somebody could figure out whose side they were on.

A field gun fired a few shells from the shore, but most problems were created by the assault junks. Three times they cast off and three times AMC302 had to round them up and take them in tow again. It was then found that a completely civilian junk had been tied in with the assault junks in the darkness. Not wishing to participate in anything military, the crew cast off their line at every opportunity.

By now it was too late to raid the mainland. In any case, wind and tide were taking the force right into Haeju itself. *Nootka* therefore ordered AMC302 to split the tow into three manageable parts, one aft and the others on either quarter. They then withdrew.

Two wounded guerrillas were treated on the 26th and there were a couple of bombardments. In one of them, *Nootka* tried to draw enemy fire to help *Belfast* pinpoint its position, but only four rounds were fired from the shore, and that was when the ships were withdrawing.

Nootka's artificers had already helped to put right evaporators and generators on board the ROK *Bak Du San* (PC701) and AMC303. Then on the 30/31st, *Bak Du San* hit a reef off the mainland near Yongpyong-ni. Her engine, generator and anti-submarine rooms, forepeak and tiller flat flooded as she slipped off the rocks and all

her pumps stopped. The weather was not calm and she was soon sinking with seas breaking over her decks.

Nootka arrived at 0250, anchored between the derelict and the shore, and sent a damage control party aboard. Having found that all bulkheads were sound, they closed the upper deck hatches and threw overboard all ammunition, stores and everything movable. The 400-ton *Bak Du San* was lashed alongside *Nootka* and the two ships got under way. 20° of starboard rudder kept *Bak Du San* about thirty feet away from the destroyer's side. By dawn they were 8,500 yards away from the enemy batteries and covered by *Belfast*. Off Yongpyong-ni, *Nootka* anchored. Her divers and those from *Belfast* started to patch the larger holes, while pumps from *Nootka* and *Firecrest* began emptying the flooded compartments. The salvage tug *Arikara* eventually arrived, carried out temporary repairs and towed *Bak Du San* to Inchon. The commanding officer of *Bak Du San* insisted on presenting his sword to Commander Steele in appreciation of *Nootka*'s prompt and effective assistance.

The next few days were spent in shelling occasional targets in the Haeju-man, but *Nootka* also had to shut down her main machinery for twelve hours when seaweed choked her condenser inlets. Repairs, exercises, carrier screening, and inshore patrols occupied her time until 25/26th September. That night *Nootka*'s radar picked up a small craft in the channel off Chodo. *Nootka* tried to intercept when it started behaving suspiciously, but it was silent and had a surprising turn of speed for very short periods. It soon got into the shallows where the destroyer could not follow. *Nootka* tried to drive it out by firing HE into the cliffs, but the contact presently disappeared. It might have been some sort of minelayer so *Nootka* called up *Defense* to sweep the area – with no result. At 0046 on the 28th, both ships detected it again on their radar and *Nootka* got between it and the mainland. A Korean interpreter told the craft that *Nootka* would open fire if it did not head for Chodo. At once black objects dropped from its stern and started to drift towards the Tribal. *Nootka* reversed engines so that her wash kept the things clear of her side. The destroyer then stood off to 1,800 yards and illuminated what appeared to be a large junk with very low freeboard. A few bofors shells were put into it and then Commander Steele sent away the cutter and an armed boarding-party.

They approached the nearest drifting object and shone a torch on it. It was a North Korean officer sitting in an inflated truck tyre – with a submachine-gun in his lap. He fired at the same time as the boat's crew, was killed and sank. If the North Koreans were prepared to try this sort of trick, there could be all sorts of snares concealed in the junk itself.

Accordingly Commander Steele recalled the cutter and took *Nootka* alongside the suspicious craft. A grapnel was thrown across, skidded over the deck, and fell back into the water. It was hauled in and two grenades caught in the prongs were delicately shaken loose. At the second attempt, the grapnel held fast, more wires were attached and *Nootka* went astern. The deck was ripped off and the vessel shown to be empty. It was then towed to seaward, while the other floating objects were kept under radar surveillance.

At daybreak five North Korean navalmen were taken prisoner. They had got rid of their weapons, but two forcibly resisted rescue and one tried to drown himself by slitting the inner tube of his tyre. The junk was then investigated. It was 25ft long and its freeboard had been cut down to 18in. Oar-propulsion made it a silent and, for short sprints, a fast shallow-draught minelayer. Two 2,000lb delayed action magnetic mines could be carried and dropped over the stern. Altogether they had laid eight. It might not be a very prepossessing prize, but nevertheless, *Nootka* had captured the only enemy warship taken at sea by the UN during the Korean War.

Those eight mines now had to be swept. *USS Chatterer* detonated the first one on 30th September and sweeping continued through October. *Nootka*'s guns covered the minesweepers in between carrier-screening duties.

Nootka was ready in the Haeju-man to cover a guerrilla raid on a mainland village on 1st November, but a rising sea forced the postponement of the operation. That afternoon 76mm guns on the mainland opened up on Mu-do, destroying a house and killing a Korean woman. *Nootka* fired sixteen rounds in return. Four direct hits blew up the enemy ammunition dump in a cave and killed or injured most of the gunners. The postponed guerrilla raid went ashore the next day supported by aircraft and *Nootka*'s gunfire. Altogether they claimed almost 300 enemy casualties and demolished the village.

Two Communist shells fell astern of *Nootka* as she left the Haeju-man on 5th November. Perhaps it was a farewell salute as the Tribal was heading for Sasebo to get ready for her homeward voyage. Preparations were only slightly delayed by an oil fire in No. 1 boiler room at 0150 on the 8th. Steam-smothering completely extinguished the blaze in forty minutes and *Nootka* sailed from Japan the next day. The Equator was crossed south of Hong Kong and King Neptune came on board to accept the homage of 240 of his new subjects. The voyage continued via Singapore, Colombo, Aden, the Suez Canal, Malta, Gibraltar and the Azores. *Nootka* arrived at Halifax at 1500 on 17th December – the second RCN warship to circumnavigate the globe. (*HMCS Quebec* had been the first.)

Nootka now underwent a major conversion. Her after superstructure was altered and a twin 3in/50 mounting installed. An aluminium lattice mast was constructed and her displacement rose to 2,200 tons (2,800 full load). She recommissioned on 15th December 1954 and began a comprehensive series of trials and working-up exercises.

The failure of a main extractor pump in March 1955 foreshadowed a series of mishaps. She was entering the Narrows at Bermuda at the time, but fortunately the wind was blowing off the reef when she stopped. Emergency repairs got her into Ireland Island Dockyard, but there were so many breakdowns that she had to return to Halifax on the 23rd.

Leaving Ireland Island Dockyard for more anti-submarine exercises on 5th May, *Nootka* ran into the breakwater. She was extensively damaged forward, but the bulkheads held and *Iroquois* floated across extra shores to help. She also supplied her sistership with fresh provisions, as most had been spoiled in the accident. *Nootka*,

escorted by *Iroquois* and *Toronto*, was able to make 6-7 knots and made for St John for the necessary repairs. She was in dock from 24th May to 6th September.

Like the other Canadian Tribals, *Nootka*'s last years were full of exercises and cruises in American and European waters. There were also refits and repairs as the destroyer's machinery started to show the strain of prolonged Atlantic service. There were of course a number of incidents during these routine years.

On 17th November 1955, *Nootka*'s whaler went across to *Requin* to collect one of the destroyer's officers who had been in the submarine as an observer during anti-submarine exercises. While coming alongside *Requin*, the whaler was upset and smashed, but those in it were rescued unharmed except for one man with a dislocated shoulder. What perhaps caused the whaler's crew a more serious shock, was the belated appearance of half a dozen large sharks, who made passes at the bits of shattered boat.

In December 1955, *Nootka* again came to a dead stop in the Narrows at Bermuda. This time the cause was water in the oil fuel.

Nootka, *Outremont* and *Buckingham* spent part of April 1956 searching for a missing Banshee off Nova Scotia, but no trace was ever found. An "interesting" few minutes was spent during RCN/USN Atlantic exercises in September 1957. A telemotor pump failed and *Nootka*'s rudder jammed with 15° of port wheel on when she was doing 26 knots.

Funnel caps had been fitted during a September 1956-February 1957 refit, while new 4in mountings were installed in April 1958 – the previous ones had been giving trouble. After this *Nootka* took a team of hydrographers to check navigational aids in the St Lawrence, and also searched for a USAF pilot who had baled out. Some wreckage was recovered, but that was all.

On 13th February 1961, one of *Nootka*'s crew – an amateur radio operator – intercepted a call from another 'ham' in Toronto who had picked up a distress signal from the Belgian yacht *Jan*, aground south of Dominica. *Nootka* was in San Juan at the time and informed the USCG in Puerto Rico. They in turn alerted the cruiser *Newport News* who stood by *Jan* until she was refloated.

March 1961 saw *Haida*, *Huron* and *Nootka* battling through an icy gale to help search for a Nova Scotian fisherman in difficulties in the Atlantic. *Nootka*'s evaporator pump, turbo-generator and sonar gear gave trouble during exercises off Canada and in the Western Approaches, in spite of regular and extensive refits. Still, on 15/16th November 1962, *Nootka* went out from Shelburne to help the long-line fishing-boat *Harvey and Sisters* in trouble off Cape Sable. *Nootka* found her hove-to, but able to make 3 knots. They set off and at daybreak the seas moderated so that the fishing-boat was able to make for port alone.

In 1963 *Nootka* accompanied *Haida* on a cruise around the Great Lakes, covering 17,000 miles from 10th June to 3rd September. Later in September and October, three funeral services were conducted on *Nootka*'s decks, for former members of the RCN who were buried at sea. In November, *Nootka* went to Bermuda for a series of exercises off the island. A feature of Bermudan weather is the 'Carpenters' Wind', so called because of the work it provides for those gentlemen. On this, her last visit,

the wind pushed her hard up against the jetty while berthing. A temporary concrete patch allowed *Nootka* to return to sea.

She arrived back at Halifax in December and was decommissioned on 6th February 1964. Held for disposal by the Crown Assets Corporation, she was eventually sold and on 6th October 1964 arrived at Faslane for scrapping.

Commanding Officers

Cdr H. S. Rayner, DSC, RCN 7th August 1946 – 17th June 1947.
Lt-Cdr M. C. Stirling, RCN 18th June 1947 – 5th September 1947.
Capt H. F. Pullen, OBE, RCN 6th September 1947 – 16th August 1948.
Cdr A. H. G. Storrs, DSC, RCN 17th August 1948 – 15th August 1949.
Cdr A. B. F. Fraser-Harris, DSC, CD, RCN 29th August 1950 – 16th September 1951.
Lt-Cdr C. E. Richardson, CD, RCN 17th September 1951 – 14th October 1951.
Lt F. P. R. Saunders, RCN 15th October 1951 – 28th October 1951.
Cdr R. M. Steele, RCN 29th October 1951 – 16th January 1953.
Lt-Cdr E. M. Chadwick, CD, RCN 15th December 1954 – 4th November 1956.
Cdr T. S. R. Peacock, CD, RCN 5th November 1956 – 31st July 1957.
Lt-Cdr C. E. Coles, RCN 1st August 1957 – 16th August 1957.
Cdr I. A. McPhee, CD, RCN 17th August 1957 – 6th January 1959.
Cdr R. A. Creery, RCN 7th January 1959 – 9th September 1961.
Cdr S. M. King, RCN 10th September 1961 – 9th November 1962.
Cdr V. J. Murphy, RCN 10th November 1962 – 9th April 1963.
Cdr D. S. Bethune, RCN 10th April 1963 – 6th February 1964.

Pennant Numbers

R96 July 1946 – December 1949
DDE213 January 1950 – October 1964

HMS Nubian

Third of name

Builders: John I. Thornycroft, Woolston, Southampton
Engined by: John I. Thornycroft, Woolston, Southampton
Ordered: 10th March 1936
Laid Down: 10th August 1936
Launched: 21st December 1937 (by Mrs Wake-Walker)
Commissioned: 1st December 1938

NUBIAN WAS awarded thirteen battle honours during the Second World War (counting the three Mediterranean citations as a single honour). Only Warspite had more – fourteen.

Yet she did not start so famously. In October 1938 she was awaiting completion, when it was suggested that she be used in still-water rolling tests. The original idea envisaged placing a 10-ton weight on the side of the ship, and then suddenly removing it with a crane. The momentum of *Nubian*'s righting should keep her rolling long enough for the relevant measurements and readings to be taken. Shipbuilding firms were approached for the use of their facilities, but they did not have a suitable crane, while their insurers looked askance at such a dubious project. It was then suggested that a platform be built over the torpedo-tubes so that 50-70 men could run to-and-fro, thereby setting up a rolling motion. This plan was also discarded and the Nubians continued preparing their ship for service in the Mediterranean. Her completion was delayed by the late arrival of gunsights and so *Nubian* was the last to join her flotilla at Malta on 2nd February 1939.

Three weeks later *Afridi* took the 1st Tribal DF to Gibraltar for the Mediterranean and Home Fleet combined exercises. Spring cruises followed, *Zulu* and *Nubian* going to St Maxime on the French Riviera. Such a visit was normally very lively, but a shadow was cast over their stay when a midshipman from *Zulu* disappeared after his dinghy capsized. *Nubian* had to return alone to Mediterranean Fleet duties on 26th March, while *Zulu* waited in the hope that he might be found. His body was eventually recovered by fishermen several weeks later.

Nubian served in *Cossack*'s division, preparing for war during the Albanian Crisis, cruising in the Eastern Mediterranean and practising flotilla and fleet evolutions. When war began *Nubian* was employed on convoy escort and contraband control. On returning to the UK with the 8th Division, defects were found in *Nubian*'s turbines. She was destored and deammunitioned at Portsmouth and towed round to Southampton on 20th October.

Reblading was finished by 23rd November. Once the necessary trials were finished, *Nubian* was called upon to carry out balloon trials at Spithead on the 28-29th. It

was hoped that towing a kite-balloon would discourage low-level air attacks. The Nubians assumed that the trials they conducted must have been successful as barrage balloons were later flown by most coastal convoys.

The next day *Nubian* left Portsmouth and a wearing winter began. She reported to Scapa Flow and then to her base at Rosyth. She sailed northabout to collect two dummy battleships from Belfast for Home Fleet service and then joined the escort of a Norwegian convoy. A search for German forces reported in the North Sea was unsucccessful, but she did attack an asdic contact – without result. Christmas Day saw *Nubian* and *Mohawk* arriving at Greenock after another Norwegian convoy. *Nubian* was then attached to *Hood*'s escort for a patrol south-east of the Faeroes. She searched for a lifeboat (found by *Isis*), screened *Barham* after she had been torpedoed, helped some J-class destroyers hunt a U-boat and fuelled in the Shetlands. In between these activities she kept returning to *Hood*'s screen and arrived at Greenock with the battlecruiser on 5th January 1940.

At 0400 on 7th January, *Nubian* was ordered to help a liner that had run aground, but just outside the boom, she collided with another merchant ship and had to return, being drydocked on the Clyde from the 14th-24th. In the next two months, *Nubian* attacked two U-boat contacts (both with *Gurkha*), escorted five return convoys to and from Norway with *Gurkha* and *Sikh*, took part in the *Altmark* hunt and had a degaussing refit at Rosyth.

The next day (25th March) *Nubian* escorted the submarine *Tribune* to Scapa Flow and then joined *Afridi* in another U-boat hunt. It was unsuccessful and resulted in damage to *Nubian*'s asdic dome. This, together with minor damage caused when she touched *Mashona* while shifting berth, was repaired at Hawthorn Leslie's Yard on the Tyne. The refit, which also made good the winter's weather damage, was completed on 11th April.

Nubian went straight into the Norwegian Campaign, arriving at Lillesjona with the oiler *War Pindari*. She then joined *Afridi* and the other Tribals in ferrying troops to Namsos and screening transports out to sea during the day. Bombing provided a constant accompaniment until they returned to Scapa Flow on 20th April. From the 24th to 29th, *Ashanti*, *Nubian*, *Mohawk* and *Sikh* patrolled fiords near Trondheim, until the Luftwaffe bombed them out. *Nubian* arrived back at Scapa Flow just in time to join *Afridi* in escorting the evacuation convoy to Namsos. The troops were then taken off on the night of 2/3rd May, although *Bison* and *Afridi* were sunk during the air attacks that developed on the homeward passage.

Efforts were still being made to hold northern Norway and *Nubian* escorted the transport *Royal Scotsman* to Bodo, where the Tribal helped to ferry troops ashore. *Nubian* arrived back at Scapa Flow on the 12th. Her part in the Norwegian Campaign was over and she had won her first battle honour.
Battle Honour awarded: NORWAY 1940

Nubian left Scapa Flow on 14th May. Nine days later she was entering Alexandria to join the 14th DF, part of Admiral Cunningham's reinforced Mediterranean

Fleet. The flotilla included her sister-ship *Mohawk* as well as J-class destroyers. Captain Mack usually led in *Jervis*, but if she was not available, he commanded the 14th DF from *Nubian*.

The war against Italy began on 10/11th June, the Fleet carrying out sweeps in the Eastern Mediterranean and along the North African coast. The destroyer was also involved in anti-submarine patrols and convoy escorts, and soon experienced the high-level bombing which was to become such a permanent feature of Mediterranean operations. *Nubian* and *Mohawk* helped screen *Warspite* who was covering a stores convoy from Malta to Alexandria. When they met the Italian Fleet off the Toe of Italy on 9th July, *Warspite* exchanged fire with enemy battleships while cruisers and destroyers skirmished in an inconclusive, smoke-confused mêlée. The Italian ships withdrew, leaving the British Fleet to escort their convoy safely back to Alexandria.
Battle Honour awarded: CALABRIA 1940

More sweeps, patrols and convoy escorts followed, the 14th DF taking part in virtually every operation carried out by the Mediterranean Fleet. Sometimes they went off in a smaller force, as on 11/12th November, when *Orion*, *Ajax*, *Sydney*, *Nubian* and *Mohawk* destroyed an enemy convoy in the Straits of Otranto.
Battle Honour awarded: MEDITERRANEAN 1940

The Mediterranean Fleet had already carried out several bombardments of, and air strikes against, the enemy ports and positions along the North African shore. When the Western Desert Force launched its December offensive, the 14th DF screened various offshore operations and themselves helped to shell Sollum.
Battle Honour awarded: LIBYA 1940

From 7th to 12th January 1941, *Nubian* and *Mohawk* shared in Operation Excess, covering convoys to and from Greece and Malta. *Mohawk* towed *Gallant* into Malta while *Nubian* stayed with the capital ships, helping to defend the battleships and *Illustrious* against Stuka divebombers. She then joined the close escort of one of the convoys and went right through to Piraeus before returning to Alexandria.
Battle Honour awarded: MALTA CONVOYS 1941

Nubian next took part in more operations along the North African shore. *Illustrious* was met and brought safely into Alexandria and the 14th DF also escorted convoys to and from Greece. The Italian Fleet tried to stop the passage of these convoys and were defeated at the Battle of Matapan. *Nubian* and *Mohawk* spent most of the day with the battleships, but at night the 14th DF roamed the area, *Nubian* completing *Pola*'s destruction.
Battle Honour awarded: MATAPAN 1941

There were other ways of interfering with convoy traffic, and early in 1941, *Nubian* helped to defend a Piraeus-bound convoy against air attack.
Battle Honour awarded: MEDITERRANEAN 1941

Jervis, *Janus*, *Nubian* and *Mohawk* next moved to Malta to act as a striking force against Axis supply convoys in the Central Mediterranean. On 15/16th April they sank the destroyers *Luca Tarigo*, *Baleno* and *Lampo*, and the merchantmen *Sabaudia*, *Adana*, *Aegina*, *Arta* and *Iserlohn* off the Tunisian coast. On the British side *Mohawk* was lost.
Battle Honour awarded: SFAX 1941

It had been suggested that the 14th DF remain at Malta. This was rejected partly because the Italians would probably provide their convoys with escorts more powerful than the Malta striking force. Also the Germans had invaded Greece on 6th April and a fortnight later another British evacuation had to be contemplated. The 14th DF was needed there, not at Malta.

Nubian disembarked the *Mohawk* survivors at Alexandria and arrived at Suda Bay on 26th April. That night she helped *Decoy* and *Hasty* escort *Glengyle* to Rafina. The big transport had to stay over a mile offshore while 3,500 troops (cut off by the German advance to Athens and Corinth) were ferried out to her by the destroyers. *Nubian* helped for a while and then went to Zea Island. The troops there had already evacuated so *Nubian* returned to Rafina. The last boat had left the beach at 0215 and the ships had sailed at 0300. *Nubian* took off three latecomers who had just arrived and hurried after *Glengyle*.

The little convoy arrived safely at Suda Bay at 1900. The destroyers disembarked their troops, fuelled and then sailed to cover the passage of convoy GA14 to Alexandria. Next night, the 28/29th, *Perth*, *Phoebe*, *Nubian*, *Decoy*, *Hasty*, *Hereward* and *Defender* again left Suda Bay. This time they were going to evacuate 7,000 troops (mainly New Zealanders) at Kalamata in the Gulf of Messini. The Germans were already breaking into the town when the ships approached, and it did not look as though evacuation would be possible. The cruisers and destroyers therefore returned to Suda Bay.

Next day *Nubian* was nearmissed by a bomb while covering the movement of GA15 to Alexandria. From 2315 to 0300 on the 29/30th, the destroyers foiled attacks on the convoy by enemy light forces. At dawn *Nubian* joined the screen around the 1st Battle Squadron and so they returned to Alexandria.
Battle Honour awarded: GREECE 1941

Both sides paused. For a fortnight the Axis forces built up their strength for an assault on Crete. For a fortnight the Allied forces prepared for its defence. For *Nubian* this meant repairs, boiler cleaning, ammunitioning and fuelling. On 15th May, bombing and strafing of the Cretan airfields was stepped up – a sure sign that an assault must be very near.

For three nights *Dido*, *Coventry*, *Nubian*, *Kandahar*, *Kingston* and *Juno* patrolled between Kasos and Leros to intercept a possible seaborne attack from the Dodecanese. Daylight hours were spent south of Crete.

Naiad, *Perth*, *Nubian*, *Kandahar*, *Kingston* and *Juno* left Alexandria again on the 19th

after refuelling. They repeated their previous patrols, but next morning learned of the airborne landings at Heraklion, Retino, Canea and Maleme. Again the cruisers and destroyers swept through the Kasos Strait, fighting off six MAS-boats. Next day the force was attacked by Ju87s, who divebombed continuously from 0950 to 1350. *Juno* was sunk at 1249, but *Nubian*, *Kandahar* and *Kingston* managed to pick up survivors. One aircraft was shot down and two damaged.

That night the force repeated their sweep, but the dawn of the 22nd found them off Milos, far to the north of Crete, intercepting enemy invasion convoys from Greece. One had already been dealt with during the night and *Nubian*'s force encountered another. Several caiques and the 790-ton torpedo boat *Sagittario* were engaged.

These actions were combined with AA fire against Ju88s, for these waters were completely dominated by the Luftwaffe. The first attacks had begun about 0830 and from 0945 enemy aircraft shuttled continuously over the British ships, bombing and strafing. The fine, clear weather afforded no protection from the hostile skies, *Naiad* and *Carlisle* being damaged. Low on AA ammunition, the cruisers and destroyers closed the main body of the Mediterranean Fleet, but there were just too many aircraft. *Warspite* was hit. *Greyhound* was detached to sink a solitary caique within sight of the Fleet. She, too, was sunk. *Gloucester*, *Fiji*, *Kandahar* and *Kingston* were detached to pick up survivors. The two cruisers never returned. All day Italian high-level bombers had been making undisturbed runs across the fleet. Their success came at 1645 when they hit *Valiant* with two bombs. Then, at last, the long, long day was over and darkness brought respite.

They fuelled and ammunitioned at Alexandria while other ships were drawn from all over the Mediterranean into the clamorous, fiery maelstrom around Crete. Then it was *Nubian*'s turn again. She left Alexandria with the 14th DF on the 25/26th, helping to screen *Queen Elizabeth*, *Barham* and *Formidable*. The carrier flew off a successful dawn strike against Scarpanto airfield, and in the morning her fighters helped to break up the retaliatory attacks.

But eight Fulmars were just not enough. At 1320 twenty Ju87s from North Africa found the ships and two bombs hit *Formidable*'s flight deck. As they pulled away, a group of Ju88s tried out what looked like the new technique of skip-bombing. One bomb hit *Nubian* on 'Y' mounting, blasting away the whole of her stern and starting serious fires.

It seemed as though *Nubian*'s name was going to be added to the losses of Crete but her pompoms shot down one of the attackers, while damage control and first aid parties got the fires out, treated the wounded, and buried the dead. Her stern was gone, her rudder was gone, but miraculously her propellers and shafts were still intact. She could do more than just move; she could do 20 knots. Steering on main engines and escorted by *Jackal*, who had been standing by the whole time, *Nubian* returned to Alexandria. She had been grievously hurt. She would be out of the war for a long time; but she had not been sunk.

Battle Honour awarded: CRETE 1941

At the end of July, *Nubian* was drydocked for inspection at Port Ibrahim. She was then undocked so that the facilities could be used by other ships while *Nubian*'s repairs were prepared. These took the form of a temporary stern bulkhead and jury rudder-post and were carried out at Port Ibrahim from 23rd July to 10th August. The night before she was due to leave *Nubian* escaped further damage when the dock was straddled by bombs.

These repairs were only temporary and much more work needed to be done. For this *Nubian* would have to go to the quieter port of Bombay, far removed from the dangers of a Mediterranean or UK dockyard. She set off escorted by *Isis* at 15 knots and after a month's wait at Aden for the south-west monsoon season to pass, arrived at Bombay on 27th September.

Besides repairs to the bomb damage, *Nubian* was extensively modernised. 'X' mounting was replaced by twin 4in AA guns and four single 20mm oerlikons were fitted. The depth-charge throwers were resited, mainmast and after funnel cut down and radar installed. The betel-chewing dockyard mateys transformed a crippled ship into a chaotic shambles and back into a modern ship of war. Most of her crew were sent to other ships, while replacements were accommodated ashore. By the end of September 1942 the refit was over and in October *Nubian* was on her way back to the Mediterranean.

The Allies had been facing defeat when she had left the Mediterranean in 1941. Now victory at El Alamein and the landings in North Africa presaged the turning of the tide. Malta, too, was about to be finally relieved. The Pedestal convoy had saved her during the summer, but those supplies were now fast running out and would be gone by the beginning of December. Then on 17th November, the Stoneage convoy left Port Said. What enemy air attacks developed fell upon the covering force of cruisers and destroyers. *Arethusa* was torpedoed, but towed back by *Petard* while the convoy reached Malta undamaged on the 19/20th.

Malta was more than saved. She could now hit back, and on 1st December *Nubian* arrived to join the reconstituted Force K. Night after night the cruisers and destroyers were out; their target the Axis convoy routes between Sicily and North Africa.

3/5th December: *Nubian* helped escort the Portcullis convoy (which included an oil tanker) into Malta without interference. From now on regular convoys were sailed to Malta from Alexandria. Their passage became routine.

20/21st December: *Jervis* and *Nubian* intercepted a freighter off Djerba, at the same time as Wellingtons arrived from Malta. The aircraft dropped flares to illuminate the target and the destroyers sank the 584-ton *Dora*.

8/9th January: *Nubian* and *Kelvin* left Malta to intercept three large merchantmen reported by air reconnaissance off the Kuriat Islands. Just before midnight three radar contacts were picked up and the two destroyers went into action with their 4.7in and 2pdr guns. Their target were three small schooners and judging by the

result they were all laden with petrol. *Nubian* and *Kelvin* swept southwards to find the three large merchant ships, but as the night wore on it became obvious that the aircraft had wrongly identified the three schooners. It was perhaps rather extravagant to send two big destroyers out after such small ships, but it had not been a wasted journey.

15/16th January: *Nubian* and *Kelvin* separated from *Dido*, *Euryalus* and *Javelin* after leaving Malta on another Club Run. Rough weather kept their speed down as the two destroyers headed for their patrol area off the southern shores of Tunisia. They were assisted by reconnaissance aircraft from Malta who found and illuminated the 790-ton torpedo boat *Perseo* and the 4,537-ton merchantman *D'Annunzio*. The first flares were sighted 20,000 yards away at 0250 and *Nubian* opened fire at 0325. Her second salvo hit *Perseo* who was also struck by three shells from *Kelvin*. *Perseo* started burning aft while some inaccurate 3.9in and automatic fire was directed at *Nubian*. By now the two destroyers were past and firing at *D'Annunzio*. She was hit by *Nubian*'s shells and by one of the five torpedoes fired by *Kelvin*. *D'Annunzio* sank at 0357 and *Nubian* plucked 25 survivors from the rough seas while *Kelvin* stood by.

One officer on board *Nubian* was injured when a heavy sea swept him against the guard rails. One of the pompoms had a premature which damaged three 2pdrs and punctured two carley floats. *Nubian*'s ARL plotter was unserviceable, while *Kelvin*'s blew a fuse when she opened fire. There were no other casualties or damage in the two British ships.

The Italian survivors told how *D'Annunzio* had been taking several hundred civil prisoners (including a number of Arabs) from Tripoli to Palermo. They did not connect the aircraft flares with surface ships and the destroyers attack took them by surprise. They considered that their escort had been inadequate. The Nubians agreed.

18/19th January: *Pakenham*, *Nubian* and *Vassilissa Olga* swept towards the Kerkenah Banks, hoping to intercept some E-boats and F-fighters that had been reported in that area. Nothing was found, but at 0247, they overhauled the 475-ton trawler *Stromboli*. Armed with a single 66mm gun, she was freighting petrol from Trapani to Lampedusa. Most of her crew abandoned ship as soon as the destroyers' shells started to arrive although her W/T operator continued to transmit. Within five minutes *Stromboli* was doomed and *Nubian* closed to pick up survivors. As she did so *Stromboli* blew up, showering the Tribal with oily soot and throwing a large jagged splinter onto her deck. Eleven men were rescued, four seriously injured.

In February, the destroyers' sweeps became less profitable. They may have controlled the sea at night, but the area was still dominated by Axis aircraft during the day. Enemy supplies were therefore convoyed during daylight hours while the Italians also laid defensive minefields along their routes to try to dissuade the night striking forces.

The destroyers still carried out their sweeps, but they also had to escort Eastern Mediterranean convoys to and from Alexandria, Malta and Tripoli. They took

advantage of any lulls to put right various defects that developed. They were at high speed for long periods during every patrol, and even when in harbour, had to stay at readiness for sea. There was always something for the engine-room personnel to do to keep the machinery working properly.

On 5th April an unfortunate accident occurred aboard *Nubian* during AA exercises. A 4in graze-fuse shell burst alongside the pompom just after leaving one of 'X' guns. It killed two ratings and another died in Bighi Hospital later.

By now the Axis armies were penned into north-eastern Tunisia. Their annihilation could only be a matter of time and the destroyers redoubled their efforts to prevent any supplies getting through to the enemy. It was not all one-sided. *Pakenham* was lost in an action with torpedo boats on the night of 16th April and *Nubian* was sent out to meet the destroyers returning to Malta There were also brushes with enemy aircraft, who machine-gunned *Nubian* at night. One night *Nubian*, *Petard* and *Paladin* encountered a submarine 200 yards away on the surface. *Petard* turned her searchlight on it and opened fire with her close range weapons. Fortunately there were no hits as the submarine dived. It was friendly. The Mediterranean was now getting congested with Allied shipping and operational sanctuaries had to be set up where submarines were not to be attacked unless definitely proved hostile.

30th April/1st May: *Nubian* and *Paladin* found the 1,592-ton *Teramo* ablaze south of Sicily, but they did not attack as it would obviously be a waste of ammunition to sink a doomed wreck. An enemy aircraft shadowed them for a while as they headed south, but Commander Holland-Martin had already seen navigation lights burning along the Sicilian coast. This seemed to indicate that a convoy was expected and so *Nubian* and *Paladin* returned along their outward route hoping to catch something. They did, off Pantelleria at 0353.

A small freighter, of 575 tons, the *SS Fauna*, was soon hit and sinking. *Nubian* and *Paladin* could not stop to pick up survivors, but raced past at 30 knots, swerving violently to avoid a possible attack by *Fauna*'s escorting E-boats. Tracked on radar, they were kept at bay by starshell and an occasional air burst. After leaving the scene, *Nubian* and *Paladin* heard five explosions, which they believed were E-boat torpedoes exploding at the end of their run, but it may have been depth-charges in the sinking ship.

3/4th May: *Nubian*, *Petard* and *Paladin* sighted the 3,566-ton cargo ship *Campo Basso* escorted by the torpedo boat *Perseo* off Kelibia. The night was very hazy and the British destroyers held their fire until they were certain that these two ships constituted the whole of the convoy. Aircraft flares had proved the best form of illumination for this sort of work but none were available that night, so *Petard* used her searchlight.

Nubian and the others opened fire at 2347. Ten salvoes hit *Campo Basso* and she caught fire immediately. *Nubian* then fired a salvo at *Perseo* who was hit at once, turning out of control with smoke and steam belching from her. The others were hitting *Perseo* as well, and only a few rounds came in reply. The British destroyers

checked that there were no more ships inshore and then circled back to finish off the enemy. *Paladin* headed for *Perseo* while *Nubian* and *Petard* made for *Campo Basso*. She was blazing from end to end and her cargo of vehicles, bombs and landmines blew up while the destroyers were still three miles away. Even at that distance, the blast was felt all over *Nubian*. Signals were whisked off the tables in the W/T office, while stokers in the boiler rooms complained that it felt as if their ears were being drawn out.

It is indicative of the pressure of work on the engine-room department that some had been busy repairing the evaporator distiller right through the action and completed the job before returning to harbour.

Although *Nubian*, *Petard* and *Paladin* altered course to pass outside the visibility range of an Italian hospital ship, they were shadowed by enemy aircraft until 0500. At dawn they returned to the area, hoping to surprise enemy destroyers picking up survivors. Instead they met the hospital ship again. While *Paladin* and *Petard* rescued five people, *Nubian* closed the hospital ship to tell her to pick up the rest. Commander Holland-Martin thought of boarding her, but four Italian fighters arrived overhead so the three destroyers set course for Malta.

Nubian did have another encounter with a hospital ship – this time a converted luxury yacht. She was wearing a Nazi ensign and seemed to be shadowing the British patrol. She would not go away and a boarding party was sent across. There was no sign of sick or wounded, but she was carrying arms and ammunition. She was therefore made a prize of war and her German crew put under armed guard, an extra watch being kept on them after it was found they were concealing bits of iron in their pockets to upset the compass. It took almost three days to reach Malta, on a diet of black bread and tinned pears.

8/13th May: *Eskimo*, *Nubian* and *Tartar* helped to prevent an enemy evacuation from Cape Bon. And then the war in North Africa was over.

Sicily would be the next objective, but first the four islands of Pantelleria, Lampedusa, Linosa and Lampione would have to be captured. *Nubian* and *Tartar* helped cruisers and other destroyers soften up the impregnable fortress of Pantelleria on 8th June. They shelled targets from a mere mile offshore, while bombers kept the enemy gunners in deep shelters. Leaving the island, the force was strafed by Fw190s, but *Tartar* arrived safely at Bone that evening, while *Nubian* returned to Malta.

By 11th June, *Nubian* and *Tartar* were back off Pantelleria. Cruisers and destroyers pounded the island's harbour works, buildings and emplacements, while bombers blasted them from above. Occasionally Allied sticks of bombs fell short near the warships and occasionally shells would come from the shore, but enemy gunfire was so ineffectual that it was impossible to tell which ships were the targets. One machine-gunner was bold enough to fire three bursts in *Nubian*'s direction. At 1000, the assault went in and soon afterwards the "impregnable" fortress surrendered for lack of water. *Nubian* continued patrolling in case some members of the garrison had not heard the

news or had decided to escape to Sicily. She shelled two small landing craft ashore in a small cove. MZ708 blew up, while the other was soon well alight. An empty Red Cross boat, RAMR563, was investigated as well as several suspicious MTBs. These turned out to be friendly and by evening, most of the cruisers and destroyers were withdrawn. *Tartar* stayed off Pantelleria with Rear-Admiral McGrigor on board, while the others went on to Lampedusa.

The bombardment of Lampedusa began just before midnight and continued through 12th June. In the morning *Nubian* shelled some shore batteries near the harbour. They returned the fire a little more accurately, but still without effect. Presently Lampedusa surrendered.

It seemed as though less and less effort was needed to capture these islands. A small force headed for Lampione. Perhaps one determined Tribal would be sufficient for the last island. Commander Holland-Martin received the signal "Deal with Linosa tomorrow. Defences unknown."

Nubian cautiously approached the steep, rocky island at 0530 on 13th June. Her motor-boat was being repaired at Malta, so her whaler took a landing party ashore. Nothing happened until *Nubian* sounded her siren, and then white sheets and towels were waved furiously from all sorts of vantage points. *Nubian* steamed slowly round the island, picking up members of the garrison who rowed out to the destroyer in leaky, old fishing-boats.

Meanwhile the landing party had set off, some using donkey transport. The Commandant could not be found as he was sleeping out. When he was located he refused to surrender because it was beneath his dignity as a commandant and a gentleman. It was pointed out to him that this was rather a futile gesture as all 168 of his troops had already surrendered and were going aboard *Nubian*. So he signed at 0615. There was something of a farewell party for him on the pier as *Nubian* moved away having destroyed some guns and communications equipment.
Battle Honour awarded: MEDITERRANEAN 1943

For a short while *Nubuan*'s routine consisted of exercises, patrols and convoy escorts. Occasionally there were air raids and on 19th-20th June *Eskimo*, *Nubian*, *Jervis* and *Lookout* escorted *Aurora* taking King George VI from Tripoli to Malta.

Since returning to the Mediterranean only 1.7% of *Nubian*'s total ammunition expenditure had been directed against aircraft. The next campaign would change that. On 7th July, *Eskimo*, *Nubian* and *Tartar* left Malta to escort troopships heading for Sicily. *Nubian* guided in the assault forces and carried out many coastal bombardments. The Luftwaffe frequently intervened and a number of ships were badly damaged or sunk. *Nubian* also witnessed the capture of *Bronzo*. Right at the end of the campaign *Nubian* and *Tartar* did a couple of sweeps along the Italian mainland itself.
Battle Honour awarded: SICILY 1943

Nubian sailed from Augusta with *Mauritius*, *Uganda*, *Orion*, *Laforey*, *Lookout*, *Tartar* and *Pindos* on 7th September for the Salerno landings farther north. The force

escorted a convoy for most of the next day and there were several air raids, one bomb nearmissing *Nubian*'s starboard bow.

Italy surrendered unconditionally on the 8th, but there was no peace on the beaches of Salerno. *Nubian* moved inshore to provide emergency gunfire support for US Rangers landed at Maiori in the early hours of the 9th. There was little communication with the troops ashore and the fire control organisation was not yet working properly. It was difficult for Allied warships to establish the position of friendly troops, so they could not always provide help when it was most needed, although *Nubian*'s gunfire was believed to have broken up one attack on the 167th Brigade. Some enemy artillery and machine guns fired out to sea, but there were no hits. *Nubian* shot down an Me109 at 1745, but as everybody was firing at it, it could not be claimed as hers alone. *Nubian* patrolled off the beaches during the night as *Tartar* had done during the day.

Nubian spent the whole of the 10th off Maiori and carried out eight shoots, destroying or dispersing guns, tanks and generally relieving pressure on the Royal Marines near Vietri. Two small boats came off from the shore and when convinced that all the fire was not being aimed at them, they came alongside *Nubian*'s disengaged side. The grateful destroyer embarked excellent grapes, lemons and peaches.

Tartar was also engaged that day and was one of the few destroyers to remain off the Salerno beaches for the whole twenty-eight days. She even fuelled and ammunitioned at the anchorage off Salerno. Not so *Nubian*, although she spent nearly all her time there. She did fuel from the oiler *Alexandre Andre* on 11th September, the day the cruiser *Savannah* was hit by an Hs293 guided bomb, but shortly afterwards *Nubian* embarked 23 Yugoslav patriots from the *LSH Hilary* and took them to Palermo.

While oiling after her arrival there just before midnight, Commander Holland-Martin had to send off the motor-boat on a tour of the harbour looking for the ammunition ship. No one seemed to know where she was but eventually the vessel was found, *Nubian* ammunitioned and left Palermo at 1030. On passage to Salerno she rescued a German air gunner with a broken leg. He was transferred to the hospital ship *Tairea* off the beaches.

Nubian carried out some bombardments on the 13th September, but the Hs293 missiles were coming over more frequently. One exploded only 150 yards from *Nubian*'s port bow at 1450. Ten minutes later *Uganda* was hit and *Nubian* helped screen her from further attacks. The hospital ship *Newfoundland* was also sunk that day.

There were three more bombardments next day, and *Nubian* also screened the cruisers while they carried out their shoots. One of *Nubian*'s four bombardments on the 15th was interrupted when she had to shift position after being bracketted by enemy shells. The next shell landed right in her previous berth.

Accurate shelling had closed the actual port of Salerno, but about midday, a convoy of US LSTs would not be dissuaded even when *Nubian*, *Tartar* and *Loyal* tried to head them off. In the end the three destroyers had to lay a smokescreen to cover the LSTs as best they could.

Warspite was hit by an Hs293 on the 16th, but still the warships stayed, serving the artillery needs of the troops ashore. It was always satisfying to hear the FOO declare enthusiastically "Good shooting!" or more phlegmatically "Target destroyed." The last of *Nubian*'s three bombardments had to be stopped because friendly troops had got so close.

Smokescreens afforded some protection during air raids, but at 0505 on the 17th, a bomb landed only 20 yards from *Nubian*'s starboard quarter. It was probably aimed at the smoke float that had just been dropped and the explosion drenched men near 'Y' mounting.

For the next ten days targets became fewer as Allied troops pushed inland. The destroyers later screened ships with larger calibre guns and then the Germans were even out of their range. During lulls the destroyers made good any minor defects and stood-by to fight off air attacks. On 26th September, *Nubian* and *Tartar* carried out an anti-submarine patrol off Salerno. Next day *Nubian* and *Loyal* escorted the troop-ship *Neuralia* back to Syracuse and then went on to Malta.
Battle Honour awarded: SALERNO 1943

On 30th September, Commander Holland-Martin did some arithmetic. Since 1st October 1942 – one year before – *Nubian* had run 53,556 nautical miles, she had been underway for 2,985 hours and she had used 16,726 tons of fuel oil. Her average speed had been 18 knots and her average fuel consumption had been one ton of fuel for every $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles.

Nubian returned to Italy in October. She augmented the AA defences of Naples and on 23rd November took *Mendip* and *Ilex* to shell enemy transport and positions near Minturno (the coastal flank of the Gustav Line). Then *Nubian* left for an undisclosed destination – home.

By the end of December, *Nubian* was undergoing refit at Palmer's Jarrow Yard. A new lattice foremast replaced the tripod to carry the weight of all the new radar and other electronic gear. A HF/DF aerial and mast was fitted on the superstructure aft, while two single 20mm oerlikons took the place of the machine guns. Four 40mm bofors were also installed. The refit was over by June 1944, and *Nubian* began working-up at Scapa Flow.

She stayed with the Home Fleet until the end of the year. Sometimes she carried out escort duty in the Western Approaches but most of her time was spent in screening Home Fleet battleships and carriers, covering Russian convoys and flying off air strikes against *Tirpitz*. Through July and August, the FAA aircraft bombed and strafed the German battleship in her lair in Altenfiord. At other times the planes attacked German coastal convoys and laid mines in Norwegian waters. *Nubian* now knew the bitter cold and violent seas of the Arctic regions. Then on 12th November, *Tirpitz* was destroyed by RAF Lancasters. There were a couple more carrier strikes against coastal targets and then the bigger units of the Home Fleet could be sent to the Far East. *Nubian* would go with them.
Battle Honour awarded: ARCTIC 1944

Nubian left the UK in January 1945. She went out via the Mediterranean and stayed at Alexandria for a month, while attempts were made to make her more habitable for the Tropics. Presently she went on to the Indian Ocean, meeting *Tartar* and *Eskimo* there. *Nubian* helped the Army clear the Japanese out of the Burmese coastal chaungs and swamps. She screened more air strikes, on targets in the Nicobars and Andamans, and along the Burma coast. She sank the Japanese subchaser No. 57 in one of the last surface actions of the War and was present at the surrender of Penang.
Battle Honour awarded: BURMA 1945

The war was over. *Tartar* and *Nubian* coursed the familiar waters of the Mediterranean for the last time. And so they came home.

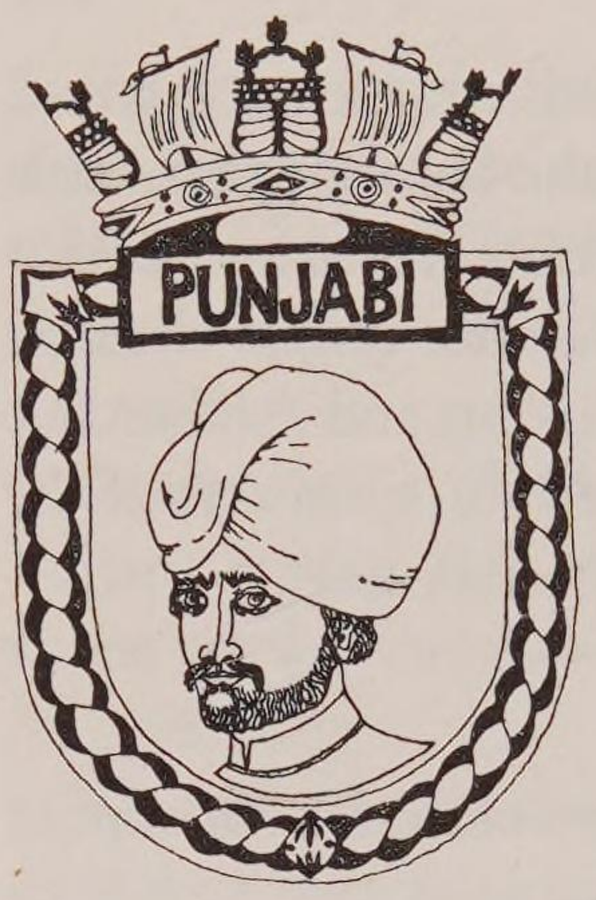
For a while *Nubian* served as a Reserve Fleet accommodation ship alongside Whale Island, Portsmouth. By 1948 she was empty and lifeless. Condemned as a target vessel in Loch Striven in July, she was scrapped at Briton Ferry on 25th June 1949.

Commanding Officers

Cdr R. W. Ravenhill, RN 31st October 1938 – November 1941.
Cdr D. E. Holland-Martin, DSC, RN November 1941 – December 1943.
Lt-Cdr T. A. Pack-Beresford, RN 3rd April 1944 – 5th January 1945.
Lt-Cdr F. C. Brodrick, RN 6th January 1945 – 14th February 1946.
Cdr R. E. Hyde-Smith, RN 18th October 1946 – December 1947.

Pennant Numbers

L36 October 1938 – December 1938
F36 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G36 Autumn 1940 – June 1949



HMS Punjabi

First of name

Builders: Scotts Shipbuilding & Engineering Co, Greenock
Engined by: Scotts Shipbuilding & Engineering Co, Greenock
Ordered: June 1936
Laid Down: 1st October 1936
Launched: 18th December 1937 (by Sir Firozkhan Noon)
Commissioned: 29th March 1939

Punjabi's cross country team were the first of her crew to go into action when the destroyer was alerted at the beginning of the war. They were sent ashore to round up all libertymen during a visit to Stornoway on Saturday, 2nd September 1939. *Punjabi* sailed as soon as they were aboard and by 1100 on the 3rd, she was patrolling in the Atlantic with the rest of the 6th DF. She had already shared in their earlier 1939 activities such as escorting the liner *Empress of Australia* and being present at the *Thetis* disaster. Now, although the 6th DF seldom worked together as a full flotilla, *Punjabi* still carried out work similar to that being done by *Ashanti* and the others.

The first three months of the war were full of anti-submarine patrols, fleet screening duties and violent gales. Returning to the Clyde from one stormy sweep with the battlecruiser *Hood*, *Punjabi* collided with the coaster *Lairdscrest*. The resulting repairs to *Punjabi*'s bow kept her in dock at Govan until early March 1940, the crew being billeted in Kinning Park Town Hall. Degaussing was also carried out during this period.

Punjabi returned to routine Home Fleet sweeps and patrols, but not for long. On 8th April she was detached with *Repulse*, *Penelope*, *Bedouin*, *Eskimo* and *Kimberley* to help the destroyer *Glowworm* off Norway. Diverted to Vestfiord, the destroyers took part in the Second Battle of Narvik on the 13th. *Punjabi* was badly damaged by six shells, but was back in the fight an hour later. Temporary repairs were effected at Skelfiord, but more work had to be done at Plymouth where *Punjabi* arrived on the 28th. Twin 4in AA guns also replaced 'X' mounting and on 12th June *Punjabi* went back to war. Five days later she was at St Nazaire.

After Dunkirk a second BEF had been sent to France, but its arrival had been overtaken by the German advance and it had to be evacuated forthwith. Soldiers, airmen, noncombatants and refugees fell back to St Nazaire, where *Punjabi* was one of the destroyers ferrying them round to the transports lying at anchor in Quiberon Bay. The Luftwaffe was also there. *Franconia* and *Oronsay* were bombed and badly damaged, while *Teiresias* and *Lancastria* were sunk with tragic loss of life on 17th June. But the convoy brought 23,000 men back to the UK.

However, there were still many Polish troops in St Nazaire and early on the 20th, *Punjabi* was sent in to collect them. Embarkation was almost finished, when they heard of a number of wounded *Lancastria* survivors in a hospital three miles away. The Germans were only thirty miles distant, but the Punjabis commandeered a lorry and drove off to fetch the wounded. They made three trips as the German advance party entered the town. When they ran out of fuel they siphoned petrol from abandoned vehicles along the road. They got all the wounded and sailed just before low water.

As soon as the evacuation was over *Punjabi* rejoined her sisterships in the Home Fleet, patrolling, escorting and waiting for the invasion. Most of her time was spent operating from Scapa Flow, but on 9th August, *Tartar*, *Punjabi* and *Zulu* met *Hood* and *Ark Royal* off the Bristol Channel and escorted them back to Scapa after their attack on the French Fleet at Oran.

The winter of 1940/41 was cold and rough. In those northern seas between Scapa and Hvalfiord, there was always water sloshing about the messdecks, as *Punjabi*'s bows had remained somewhat weakened since her Clyde collision. Sometimes even ice formed on the messdecks. All looked forward to a few days' boiler clean at their home port of Plymouth at the beginning of 1941.

Punjabi's next docking in February was not so opportune – it was in the drydock sent up to Scapa Flow. Another refit lasted almost the whole of April. This was carried out at Rosyth and included the installation of Type 286M radar.

Then on 21/22nd May, *King George V*, *Galatea*, *Kenya*, *Hermione*, *Victorious*, *Inglefield*, *Intrepid*, *Punjabi*, *Active* and *Nestor* were ordered to stand-by at Scapa. *Bismarck* was believed to be ready to break out into the Atlantic. Confirmation came through on 22nd May and the Home Fleet sailed at 2245. But *Punjabi* was not to share in the final cornering of the German battleship. Two days of high-speed search soon depleted the destroyers' oil and by the 24/25th, all destroyers had been sent to Hvalfiord to fuel.

Within a month Hitler had attacked the USSR and attention was soon diverted towards the possibilities of Arctic aid to Russia. The preparations involved the investigation of Spitsbergen's use as a base for a striking force of cruisers and destroyers operating against German convoy traffic off Norway. Force K (*Nigeria*, *Aurora*, *Tartar* and *Punjabi*) left Scapa Flow on 27th July, fuelled in Iceland and arrived off Spitsbergen on the 31st.

Nigeria's aircraft and the destroyers made sure that Isfiord was safe for the cruisers and then they approached the settlement of Longyearby. Some Norwegians agreed to join the Free Norwegian forces in the UK and they took passage in a laden collier. The others stayed for the time being to detain colliers arriving from Norway, and to maintain the routine weather reports so as not to arouse German suspicions. The Russian settlement at Barentsburg was equally cooperative.

Leaving Spitsbergen, Force K went on to Bear Island. A meteorological station there was blown up and the Norwegians evacuated. Shadowed by a German sea-plane, Force K swept along the Norwegian coast and returned to Scapa.

Rear-Admiral Vian in *Nigeria* reported that a military occupation of Spitsbergen

would be feasible but the winter ice in the fiords would prohibit its use as an all-year-round naval base. In any case, a striking force would not be able to approach the Norwegian coast unseen.

From now on all *Punjabi*'s operations concerned Russian convoys. Together with the other Tribals she served as close escort, screened the covering capital ships or carried out aggressive sweeps along the convoy routes. In September she went to the Faeroes with *Ashanti* and in October shared in an air strike against Bodo.

Punjabi was refitted at Palmer's Jarrow Yard in January 1942 and she immediately returned to Scapa Flow and her Home Fleet duties. On 5th March she joined *Ashanti* and *Bedouin* in an abortive Home Fleet hunt for *Tirpitz*. Within a few hours of arriving back at Scapa Flow on the 10/11th the destroyers were out again to intercept the new German battleship. This time *Punjabi* was forced to return with disabled steering gear. It was soon repaired and on the 20th *Punjabi* was screening the PQ13 covering force.

By now the Germans were striking at the Russian convoys. PQ13's escort had been damaged and QP10 was postponed until *Punjabi* had been attached to its escort in the Kola Inlet. The convoy sailed on 10th April in thick, snowy, icy weather. Next day the first air attacks began. Two Ju88s were shot down but the *SS Empire Cowper* was sunk. U-boats torpedoed *Kiev* and *El Occidente*, while *Harpalion* was lost to air attack on the 12th. Four Ju88s were also shot down. Fog rolled over the convoy at midday, granting some respite, but it was followed by a full week of fierce gales. They arrived in Iceland on the 22nd.

They replenished and conferred at Hvalfiord and then there was another Russian convoy, PQ15. This time *Punjabi* was to join the covering force of *King George V*, *Washington*, *Wichita*, *Tuscaloosa* and *Victorious*. They sailed from Hvalfiord on the 29th. *Punjabi* topped up her tanks at Seidisfiord and rejoined. She was second ship in the starboard column of destroyers, with *Martin* and *Marne* astern of her.

1st May was calm, but frequent snow showers and dense patches of fog often cut visibility down to two cables (400 yards) very suddenly. The escort was stationed eight cables away from the big ships. If visibility deteriorated, this distance could be halved at the discretion of the leader, lest the destroyers lose touch with the flagship. Closing and opening the screening distance was frequently necessary and was done by following the fog-buoy towed by the next ahead as it disappeared into the fog.

The First Dog-Watch men were having tea just before 1600 when the visibility suddenly closed in yet again. The starboard leader closed in towards the big ships. *Punjabi* turned, following the fog-buoy, lost it and ran in towards the fleet line of advance at an angle of 80°. The 35,000-ton *King George V* crashed into *Punjabi*'s port side just abaft the engine room and went through her "like a butter-knife" at 25 knots.

Punjabi's stern sank almost immediately. Her ready-use depth-charges went off, pinching in the battleship's sides underwater and causing severe internal bruising to survivors in the water. *Washington*, astern of *King George V*, had various fire-control

mechanisms and radars damaged by the shock of the explosion. *Martin* and *Marne* went full astern and were just missed by *Wichita* and *Victorious* respectively.

Meanwhile *Punjabi*'s forepart was sinking quite slowly so that 169 people, including Commander Waldegrave, were saved by *Martin* and *Marne*. Many who were picked up unconscious could not be revived, but one man perhaps owed his life to the freezing waters. Several of his ribs were broken when he was thrown against the mess-table and then he was severely scalded when the tea urn overturned on him. The pain and blisters were considerably reduced by his instant immersion in the chilling waters. Another rating had enough time to change into his best suit, collect his valuables, put on an immersion suit and gently lower himself into the sea. He came on board *Martin*, emptied out his shoes, took off the immersion suit, donned dry socks, and save for a damp patch on his collar, looked ready for Sunday Divisions in barracks.

Commanding Officers

Cdr J. T. Lean, RN 22nd February 1939 – 27th February 1941.
Cdr S. A. Buss, MVO, RN 28th February 1941 – 13th January 1942.
Cdr The Hon. J. M. G. Waldegrave, DSC, RN 14th January 1942 – 1st May 1942.

Pennant Numbers

F21 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G21 Autumn 1940 – May 1942

HMS Sikh

Third of name

Builders: Alexander Stephen, Govan
Engined by: Alexander Stephen, Govan
Ordered: June 1936
Laid Down: 24th September 1936
Launched: 14th December 1937
Commissioned: 12th October 1938

SIKH WAS INTENDED for Mediterranean service with the 1st Tribal DF although she was one of the second batch to be ordered. Work went ahead quickly and she ran some of her builder's trials in August 1938. Her gyro-compass and other equipments were installed at Chatham in October and she was completed on 2nd November.

Being the RN's latest destroyer, *Sikh* was chosen to bring King Carol and Crown Prince Michael of Roumania from Boulogne to Dover. With an air and destroyer escort, they made the cross-Channel passage on 15th November. *Sikh* then returned to Portsmouth while the royal party went on for a State Visit to Buckingham Palace. *Sikh* took them back from Dover to Boulogne on the 18th. After more working-up, she went out to the Mediterranean, arriving at Malta on 2nd December. Certain defects needed repair, this being completed on 19th December.

February 1939 saw *Afridi* taking the flotilla to Gibraltar for exercises. These were followed by individual cruises and on 21st March 1939, *Sikh* went to Cartagena to embark refugees from the Spanish Civil War. *Gurkha* and *Sikh* returned together from Gibraltar to Malta, suffering a minor collision en route during a towing exercise. After this slight damage had been repaired, exercises and cruises in company with *Afridi* occupied *Sikh*'s time during the next few crisis-ridden months.

Afridi, *Gurkha*, *Mohawk* and *Sikh* were patrolling the Red Sea when war began, but they soon returned to the Mediterranean for convoy escort and blockade duties. Presently *Sikh* developed a rattle at a certain speed. Her turbines were inspected at Malta and bits of the blades were found in the drains – critical vibration had stripped some of her blades and worn a bearing. *Sikh* was towed round from Sliema to the dockyard, sample blades were flown home and replacements flown back.

Malta was gradually becoming accustomed to the war. The blackout was enforced, although it did not start until midnight and could be postponed if an important concert was running late. When a capital ship was drydocked, however, the blackout was faithfully observed from dusk to dawn.

At last the repairs were finished and *Sikh* arrived back at Chatham on Boxing Day. After giving leave during a short refit, she rejoined the 4th DF and was based

at Rosyth and Scapa Flow. Anti-submarine patrols, fleet sweeps and convoy escorts were her lot for the next few months. There was plenty of dashing about after reported U-boats and there was a good deal of very rough weather. In February 1940, *Sikh* took part in the *Altmark* incident, while on 16th March, there was an air raid on the Orkneys. The destroyers' AA gunfire in Gutter Sound seemed to worry the big ships in the Flow more than the Luftwaffe.

By the end of March, *Sikh* was escorting a crippled K-class destroyer towards the Clyde. Everyone was looking forward to a boiler clean alongside *Woolwich* at Greenock but the pleasure was deferred when *Sikh* was ordered to screen *Ark Royal*, leaving the UK for aircrew training off Gibraltar. To the Sikhs' intense disappointment, *Woolwich* had meanwhile been moved to Scapa and *Sikh* had her boiler clean there. The only happy man on board was an Orcadian who borrowed a push-bike to get home.

Sikh moved to Rosyth to take part in Plan R4, but the German invasion of Norway sent her to sea with *Afridi* and the other Tribals. After *Gurkha* had been sunk, *Sikh* took part in the landing at Namsos and experienced the almost continuous air attacks that developed. There was more bombing (usually at meal times) when *Ashanti*, *Nubian*, *Sikh* and *Mohawk* patrolled the fiords near Trondheim from 26th to 28th April. *Sikh* was fortunate. Her sole damage was a single splinter hit in one funnel.

As soon as she returned to Scapa, *Sikh* was detailed for the evacuation from Central Norway at the beginning of May. She then accompanied the 6th DF when they embarked troops in the Andalsnes area.

After an escort trip to Harstad, *Sikh* and three French destroyers spent several days patrolling in the Skagerrak and off the coast of Holland. A routine engine-room inspection at Scapa Flow found that the old blade trouble had started again. This time *Sikh* went round to Alexander Stephen's Yard at Govan. They fitted a new set in a refit that lasted from 30th May to 29th June.

Routine screening, North Sea patrols and anti-invasion exercises now followed, continuing through the autumn and winter. *Sikh* escorted convoys in the Western Approaches and capital ships on their sweeps in northern waters. Mostly it was monotonous work in filthy weather, but there were some notable incidents. *Sikh* took one East Coast convoy from the Forth to the Thames during the Battle of Britain. Much to their surprise it was one of their quietest operations. Not so the night of 13/14th October, when *Cossack*, *Ashanti*, *Sikh* and *Maori* attacked a German convoy off Norway. 16/17th October was another eventful night when *Sikh* narrowly avoided following *Fame* and *Ashanti* onto the beach at Whitburn.

Soon after returning to Rosyth, *Sikh* was bumped into by a dockyard tug and had to go into Henry Robb's dock at Leith. Repairs were completed on 8th November and *Sikh* returned to service. But her winter troubles were not over. In January 1941 she was damaged in a collision with *Mashona* at Scapa Flow and had to go to the Tyne for refit. By the time repairs had been completed on 14th April, *Sikh* was also carrying Type 286M radar and had had twin 4in AA guns mounted in 'X' position.

On 21st May, *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Sikh* and *Zulu* left the Clyde to escort another troop

convoy through the Western Approaches. Detached to screen Home Fleet battleships, the destroyers intercepted *Bismarck* and carried out a whole series of torpedo attacks on her. The 4th DF was still in touch at dawn on 27th May and witnessed *Bismarck*'s destruction. *Sikh* then returned to the Clyde with *Rodney*.

Two single 2pdr guns were mounted on her bridge wings in June when she was based at Plymouth to defend Channel convoys against E-boats. Next month *Cossack*, *Maori* and *Sikh* took part in passing the Substance convoy to Malta. Then in August, *Sikh* underwent an extensive refit at Falmouth. It included more radar and the installation of two single 20mm guns aft. Her after funnel was cut down and mainmast removed. Completed on 20th September, she went round to Londonderry and left there on 1st October.

After another short refit in the drydock at Gibraltar, *Sikh* helped to escort *Nelson* back to the UK. (The battleship had been temporarily repaired following a torpedo hit during the Halberd Malta convoy.) The weather on this passage was exceedingly rough.

Sikh rejoined Force H at Gibraltar, taking part in various sweeps and exercises. She also screened *Ark Royal* during ferrying operations to Malta and it was while returning from one of these that the carrier was torpedoed on 13th November. It was therefore believed that the Germans were passing U-boats through the Straits of Gibraltar. *Sikh*, *Maori*, *Zulu*, *Legion* and *Isaac Sweers* shared a number of preventive patrols with FAA aircraft.

Ordered to reinforce the 14th DF, *Sikh*, *Maori*, *Legion* and *Isaac Sweers* proceeded eastward. Off Cape Bon they sank the Italian cruisers *Alberico Barbiano* and *Alberto Di Giussano*. After calling at Malta, *Sikh* and *Maori* took part in the 1st Battle of Sirte and arrived at Alexandria on 18/19th December. It was now decided that *Sikh* and *Maori* should return to Malta, join *Zulu* and form the 22nd DF, acting as a striking force against Axis supply convoys between Italy and North Africa. They had some success and also provided extra cover at their end for Malta convoys. At the same time the German air offensive was intensified and *Maori* was sunk on 11/12th February. Malta was fast becoming untenable as a base for surface warships.

On the 13th, *Penelope*, *Lively*, *Sikh* and *Zulu* escorted *Breconshire* and two empty merchantmen eastwards from Malta. They fought off almost continuous air attacks and next day met and exchanged convoys with Rear-Admiral Vian. The Malta ships turned back towards the island with *Rowallan Castle*, the last merchant ship left out of the three that had sailed from Alexandria. Twenty minutes later *Rowallan Castle*'s engines were disabled by a nearmiss. *Zulu* took her in tow, but could hardly move the 8,000-ton freighter.

As night came on it was obvious that *Rowallan Castle* would never reach Malta before dawn. The whole force might be overwhelmed by daylight air attacks. So *Lively* took off *Rowallan Castle*'s crew and torpedoed her. *Penelope* and *Lively* then made for Malta while Commander Graham in *Zulu* reported the situation to Rear-Admiral Vian. He also mentioned that Commander Stokes was ill and that Lieutenant Cole-Hamilton was temporarily in command of *Sikh*. Accordingly *Zulu*

and *Sikh* were ordered to join Rear-Admiral Vian and proceed with his convoy to Alexandria. They arrived there on the 16th and *Sikh* now became the 22nd DF leader under Captain Micklethwait.

The Luftwaffe bases in Cyrenaica hazarded any Eastern Mediterranean convoy to Malta, but they still had to be run. At the same time the Army had to be supplied along the North African shore, so on 1st-2nd March *Zulu* and *Kelvin* escorted the drifter *Ocean Spray* into Tobruk.

A week later *Sikh* and *Zulu* left Alexandria in a force of cruisers and destroyers. Covered at first by Beaufighters, they met *Cleopatra* who had been undergoing bomb-damage repairs at Malta. Air attacks began and lasted until dusk of the 11th. They were fought off, but at 2000 U-565 torpedoed and sank *Naiad*. The destroyers picked up survivors.

Although the Mediterranean Fleet had been seriously weakened in recent months, it did not remain entirely on the defensive. 15/16th March saw *Dido*, *Euryalus*, *Sikh* and *Zulu* bombarding Rhodes. Even the prosaic task of convoy escort afforded opportunities for offensive action.

Early on the 20th, *Breconshire*, *Clan Campbell*, *Pampas* and *Talabot* left Alexandria for Malta escorted by *Carlisle* with the 22nd DF split into two divisions. (*Sikh*, *Lively*, *Hero* and *Havock* plus *Zulu* and *Hasty*.) Next day three cruisers, four fleet destroyers and six Hunts joined, while fighter escort was provided from time to time. *Penelope* and *Legion* arrived from Malta at dawn on the 22nd, but so did Italian high-level and torpedo-bombers at 0935. Wind and sea increased to a full south-easterly gale during the day.

The Italian fleet chose to intervene at 1410; one battleship, three cruisers and ten destroyers. Heaving and plunging, the British cruisers and destroyers formed divisions and laid dense smokescreens that drifted towards the approaching Italian cruisers. They were held off in an action that lasted from 1457 to 1535 and then Rear-Admiral Vian's force switched to high-angle fire and returned to help *Carlisle* and the Hunts defend the convoy against enemy aircraft. Altogether there were fifteen air attacks during the 2nd Battle of Sirte and AA ammunition was soon running low.

By 1640 the Italians had concentrated on their battleship *Littorio* and were closing again. Again the British cruisers and destroyers laid dense smokescreens to hide the convoy which moved southwestwards in a series of dog-legs still under aerial attack. Again Admiral Vian's ships plunged through the smoke firing guns and torpedoes and disappearing back into the black clouds. Sometimes the destroyers were covered by the cruisers as they strove to get within torpedo range. Sometimes they sortied alone. Smoke and spray hampered both sides, but ships were hit on both sides. *Sikh* was straddled and fired two torpedoes at the Italians from 4,400 yards, but without result.

At 1820 the Italians withdrew as the last torpedoes were fired at them. No torpedo hits were reported and more damage was probably done by the weather. *Littorio* shipped thousands of tons of water, while the destroyers *Scirocco* and *Lanciere* foundered

on their homeward journey. On the British side, *Zulu* was among the ships to suffer weather damage. Her fo'c'sle deck was stove in by a heavy sea.

The convoy was dispersed at 1900 and made for Malta. *Clan Campbell* was sunk en route and *Breconshire* had to be beached, while the other two became targets for air attack while unloading. Only 5,000 tons of supplies got through out of the 25,000 tons despatched. Admiral Vian's force was attacked by Ju88s and torpedo-bombers for most of the next day while returning to Alexandria in very heavy weather. They were covered by aircraft from 0800 on the 24th and arrived safely soon after midday.

Zulu's bows had to be repaired at Port Said, the final work being done when she was drydocked at Port Tewfik. She was not operational again until May. During this period *Sikh* was employed on various Eastern Mediterranean convoys between Alexandria and Haifa.

This may have been a quiet period for the two Tribals – it was not for the rest of the British forces in the Mediterranean. *Jackal*, *Kipling* and *Lively* were lost in one day to air attack off Sollum. At the end of May Rommel began an offensive in the desert, while Malta was now in desperate straits. Accordingly two Malta convoys were planned; Harpoon (whose escort included *Bedouin*) from Gibraltar, and Vigorous from Alexandria.

Sikh, *Zulu*, *Hasty* and *Hero* sailed on 14th June to join Rear-Admiral Vian's force of cruisers and destroyers around the convoy later in the day. The convoy had already suffered loss in 'Bomb Alley' between Crete and Libya. Continuous air raids from 1600 to 2115 sank the merchant ship *Bhutan*, while a U-boat was driven off at 2000. E-boats were seen approaching at dusk, while aircraft dropped flares during the night.

The whole of the 15th was a night and a day of complicated march and counter-march. At 0145, the convoy reversed course so that the Allied aircraft and submarines could attack the Italian fleet which was now approaching. *Newcastle* was torpedoed by an E-boat at 0350 and *Hasty* at 0528 (the destroyer having to be sunk). By 0656 the Italian fleet was believed to be severely damaged so the convoy turned westwards and made for Malta again. Then it was learned that the air attacks had not been successful and the Italian fleet was still approaching, so at 0940 the convoy turned back to Alexandria.

All the time high-level bombers were passing over the convoy. Two hours later twenty Ju87s damaged *Birmingham* while at 1545, thirty to forty Ju87s disabled *Airedale* and she had to be sunk. The ultimate decision regarding the convoy's return to Egypt was determined by the rate at which AA ammunition was being expended. There were more losses during the night. *Hermione* was torpedoed by a U-boat while *Nestor* had to be sunk after being damaged earlier by bombing. Convoy and escort arrived at Alexandria on the 16th.

A fortnight later Rommel's troops had crossed the Egyptian frontier and were fast approaching Alexandria. It was not known that the El Alamein line would hold and so it was decided that the remnants of the Mediterranean Fleet should be dispersed.

Damaged and vulnerable ships would pass through the Suez Canal, while the cruisers would be based at Port Said with the destroyers and submarines at Haifa.

The submarine depot ship *Medway* therefore left Alexandria on 29/30 June escorted by *Sikh*, *Zulu* and *Hero*, she was carrying over a thousand men, ninety torpedoes and tons of invaluable stores, spares and equipment. As they moved out a mine sank the tug *Pharos*. The explosion was so close to *Sikh*'s port bow that the water deluged her bridge and fo'c'sle. Twenty miles outside Alexandria, enemy aircraft dropped flares and U-372 put three torpedoes into *Medway*. She sank in ten minutes, but the destroyers rescued almost everybody on board. U-372, a 769-ton Type VII U-boat, got away.

For the next couple of months *Sikh* and *Zulu* were officially employed on convoy work in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, most of their time was spent in nightly anti-submarine sweeps up and down the Palestinian coast as it was feared that Italian human torpedoes might be sent into Haifa. They were engaged on one of these sweeps on 3/4th August, when they saw a U-boat on the surface. They chased it, lost it and found it again at 1000, still on the surface.

Zulu's 4.7in gunfire straddled the diving U-boat at extreme range. The destroyers depth-charged the contact and presently *Croome*, *Tetcott* and a Wellington of No. 22 Squadron joined in. *Zulu* ran out of depth-charges first and had been ordered back to Haifa for more when U-372 was finally destroyed. *Medway* had been avenged.

The destroyers also ferried troops between Palestine and Cyprus and on the 26th picked up survivors from the merchant ship *Empire Kumari* that had been torpedoed. The human-torpedo scare was well founded, for on 10th August, the trawler *Islay* sank the Italian U-boat *Scire* very close inshore. Divers found that she was carrying human torpedoes in special containers on her hull.

From 11th to 15th August, the Pedestal convoy (its escort including *Ashanti*, *Eskimo*, *Somali* and *Tartar*) was fought through from Gibraltar to Malta. To provide some sort of diversion, the Eastern Mediterranean cruisers and destroyers took a decoy convoy towards Malta. They provoked little enemy reaction and after two days turned back demonstrating against Axis air units off Rhodes.

Sikh and *Zulu* now began preparing for what Admiral Harwood called "a forlorn hope". It was necessary for Rommel's supplies to be damaged, to relieve pressure on the Eighth Army at El Alamein. A raid on Tobruk seemed to offer the best dividends.

Coming westwards from Alexandria, the North African shore suddenly reverses itself and forms an eastward jutting peninsula before running westward again. On the map, the coastline has the appearance of a reversed figure '5', thus 'ƨ'. The town of Tobruk lies on the southern shore of the peninsula.

Unloading there was being done by a wrecked ship whose tank-lifting derricks were still intact. The nightly air raids had almost no effect on this simple equipment and in any case the petrol dump was concealed in bombproof shelters. If Tobruk could be neutralised, Rommel would be forced to retreat, because he did not have enough motor transport to haul his supplies overland all the way from Benghasi. The raid on Tobruk seemed feasible as intelligence reports indicated that there were

few troops and they were always withdrawn from the harbour area during the nightly air raids. So planning began for Operation Agreement.

Four groups would be directly involved, although other units would take part in the diversions. Force A would be *Sikh* and *Zulu*, painted an Italian grey with red-and-white Italian recognition stripes on their fo'c'sles. They would be carrying about 350 Royal Marines and soldiers. Force B, working with the Long Range Desert Group, comprised 73 Special Services personnel posing as British POWs, and 21 men of the Special Identification Group (Jews dressed as Germans). Twenty-one MTBs and MLs carrying 150 soldiers made up Force C, while *Coventry* and eight Hunts formed Force D.

Diversions would be caused by an RAF raid on Tobruk, the bombardment of El Daba by *Dido* and five destroyers, an SAS raid on Benghasi, a Sudan Defence Force attack on Fort Jalo, and an LRDG raid on Barce Airfield. Force B, pretending to be British POWs guarded by German soldiers would get into Tobruk from the desert. After overrunning the gun positions on the southern shore of the harbour entrance, they would guide in Force C. The MTBs and MLs would land their troops over this beachhead. The demolition parties would wreck the harbour equipment and blow up the petrol dumps, while gunners manned the enemy's AA weapons.

Meanwhile Force A would be guided into position at Marsa Mreira on the north shore of the peninsula by lights landed from the submarine *Taku*. At 0300 their Royal Marines and soldiers would go ashore in twelve dumb lighters towed by four motor-lighters. They would cross the peninsula, capture the town, destroy the tank repair shops and link up all the forces ashore. The rest of Force B (the LRDG) would then drive into Tobruk, contribute to the general destruction and release 4,000 genuine POWs in the area.

While all this was going on *Sikh* and *Zulu* would proceed westwards, but turn round and come back at dawn, threading the minefields and breaking the boom at the harbour entrance. They would remain at anchor for the whole day, listing 15° and emitting plenty of smoke and steam. They would thus pretend to be damaged Italian ships (probably Navigatori-class destroyers) who had just managed to reach the safety of Tobruk. So any enemy reconnaissance aircraft would assume that Tobruk was still in Axis hands. Even if there were air raids on the British forces ashore, the pilots would leave the two Tribals alone. At dusk, *Sikh* and *Zulu* would sink all the ships and harbour craft in the port, evacuate all personnel and go, their withdrawal being covered by Force D.

Ominous setbacks occurred during training. There were not enough boats to carry all Force A's personnel in one wave and there was no time for practice in the dumb lighters. They were supposed to be very handy, but in fact they were liable to capsize easily. They were also made of green wood, and canvas had to be inserted between the inner and outer planking to keep the water out. The Ford V8 engines for the motor-lighters did not arrive until just before the operation and there was no time to test them before their installation. There was no time for further training after the dress

rehearsal in Cyprus, as *Sikh* and *Zulu* had to go back to their anti-submarine work for a fortnight before the operation.

On 12/13th September, *Sikh* and *Zulu* embarked their assault parties who were accommodated in the messdecks. Motor-cycles, petrol, explosives and other equipment was piled around 'Y' mounting. The two whalers aboard each ship had been moved to auxiliary davits forward and replaced by two 25ft motor-lighters. Six dumb lighters were stacked in the waist, ready to be lowered on the torpedo davits. Aboard *Zulu*, Commander White buckled on his special commando knife. They were ready to go.

By now they must have been among the last people to know where they were going. There were so many units and people involved that even without indiscretions, onlookers could watch training and work out what was going on. This, coupled with generally lax security, enabled enemy agents to send detailed information to their commanders. Even dock labourers had shouted out "Tobruk" to the Tribals as they sailed, before the crews knew themselves.

Some things went right. The diversions worked. Force B got into Tobruk, but when they tried to guide Force C in, the MTBs and MLs were destroyed or driven off by shore batteries. Meanwhile *Taku* had reported that conditions were suitable for Force A's landing. *Sikh* and *Zulu*, covered at first by Force D, had steered a course to avoid regular enemy reconnaissance and were now approaching the shore. The landing place was obscured by smoke drifting from the air raid fires.

At 0300, *Sikh* and *Zulu* stopped two miles offshore and began lowering the assault boats. It should have taken twenty minutes. It took forty. Everything had to be done in complete darkness and the fo'c'sle party kept sliding about on the wet paint. A lowering shackle broke in *Sikh* and had to be repaired. The swell heaved the unwieldy boats about as the motor-lighters tried to join up the dumb craft in tows of three. Tows parted, but the first wave set off at 0348. *Sikh* and *Zulu* circled to seaward to avoid being spotted.

They returned to their position at 0414, ready to meet the empty lighters and send the second wave ashore. *Sikh* found one tow of boats that had broken down and had not yet reached the shore, so the two destroyers moved in another mile. A few boats had reached the shore, but some upset, the alarm was given and the landing party was soon involved in a fire-fight with German and Italian troops, sailors and carabinieri.

Two hours had passed since Force A's H-hour. *Sikh* was picking up one tow of boats at 0505 when a shore searchlight suddenly lit her up. *Zulu* moved away for five minutes and then came in bow on to the searchlights. Ships and shore batteries were firing now. There were some light AA and 5in guns in the area, but those which did most damage were the deadly 88s.

One 88mm shell exploded in *Sikh*'s gearing-room, wrecked the steering gear and destroyed the forced lubrication system so that her main engines must inevitably seize up. A second hit forward blew up 'A' guns' ready ammunition and started a severe fire which killed, burned or disabled all the Royal Marines who had just been picked

up, as well as the repair parties in that section. It also trapped all the second wave Royal Marines who had been waiting in the messdecks. Emergency damage control and first aid parties tried to rescue the wounded, flood 'A' and 'B' magazines and deal with the blaze.

Sikh was steaming in circles at 10 knots, and getting slower. A third shell struck her range-finder director, and from then on all her guns were firing in local control. As *Sikh* came to a stop Captain Micklethwait ordered all RN forces to leave the area, while *Zulu* towed *Sikh* clear.

Zulu, being hit herself, passed another tow of boats and closed her leader. *Sikh* still had a little way on her, and this, combined with the swell, spoiled the first attempt to pass a line. *Zulu* thumped into her sister ship and circled round to try again. A fourth shell set off the demolition charges around *Sikh*'s 'Y' mounting and started another bad fire aft, while a fifth shell struck 'B' mounting, killing the gun crews. Their places were taken up by others and the guns continued firing.

Zulu came in again, still being hit, but not disabled. A heaving-line was passed, but it broke and *Zulu* had to circle again. Captain Micklethwait went forward to supervise the towing preparations on the fo'c'sle just as a sixth shell smashed the bridge. *Zulu* got a heaving-line across and followed it with a wire. It was now broad daylight and the two ships were just getting underway when an 88mm shell hit the wire on *Zulu*'s quarterdeck and severed it.

There was no hope now of saving *Sikh*. *Zulu* laid a smokescreen and circled to come in again, this time to take off the people from her crippled sister. But it was too dangerous. At 0708 Captain Micklethwait ordered Commander White away. *Zulu* laid a smokescreen to try to cover *Sikh*'s last minutes. Commander White then closed the surviving MTBs and MLs and told them to try to creep along the coast. *Zulu* headed out to sea at 30 knots and was out of range at 6 miles. Far astern aircraft circled two climbing columns of smoke.

At the base of that smoke, *Sikh* was still in action, although she was being hit almost constantly. 'X' guns continued firing until they ran out of ready-use ammunition. Confidential books were thrown overboard and so was anything that would float. Captain Micklethwait blew the scuttling charges, flooding the engine and boiler rooms, made a final tour of his ship and left.

Sikh took a long time to die, heeling over to starboard as she sank. Shells still hit her and dropped among the survivors, many of whom were badly burned. They were also strafed by aircraft, but they assembled a selection of the best looking wreckage, hoping that it would drift past Tobruk. They could then get ashore and make their way back to the British lines over the desert. Somebody got the engine of one of the motor-lighters going and this gave the raft of wreckage some power. They made for Alexandria at a speed of one knot. Farther out to sea one of *Zulu*'s tows was also heading eastward. Both groups were spotted from the air and then rounded up by enemy landing craft.

The first question at Captain Micklethwait's interrogation by an Italian intelligence officer was, "You were two hours late. Why?"

Commanding Officers

Cdr J. A. Giffard, RN 5th September 1938 – 24th October 1940.
Cdr G. H. Stokes, RN 25th October 1940 – 2nd February 1942.
Lt D. E. Cole-Hamilton, DSC, RN 3rd February 1942 – 16th February 1942.
Capt St. J. A. Micklethwait, DSO, RN 17th February 1942 – 14th September 1942.

Pennant Numbers

L82 August 1938 – December 1938
F82 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G82 Autumn 1940 – September 1942

HMS Somali

First of name

Builders: Swan Hunter, Wigham Richardson, Wallsend
Engined by: Wallsend Slipway
Ordered: June 1936
Laid Down: 26th August 1936
Launched: 24th August 1938 (by Lady Richardson)
Commissioned: 12th December 1938

Somali was the first Home Fleet Tribal to be completed. Upon her captain devolved the responsibility of ensuring the efficiency of the eight ships making up the 2nd Tribal DF. All the Tribal commanding officers were experienced in destroyers and all were very proud of their commands. As each ship was commissioned she joined the others, until by the outbreak of war, they were a happy and confident team.

Of course, being the first of the flotilla, *Somali* started off on her own. She spent most of January 1939 in severe weather at Portland, carrying out torpedo and harbour exercises which included boat work with the new type of fast motor-boats that the Tribals carried. She sailed on 31st January and next day met the submarine *Starfish*. They proceeded at 9 knots to the Tagus where they joined *Southampton*, *Sheffield* and *Porpoise* for a visit to Lisbon.

Their stay, from 3rd to 8th February, was a great success. There was a host of formal and informal engagements, sports fixtures, tours and at least 5,000 people visited *Somali* and the submarines alongside her. The British also took the opportunity of noting any cargoes destined for Germany. Stray bits of information might prove very useful to intelligence officers in London.

The squadron arrived at Gibraltar on the 9th, ready for the combined Home and Mediterranean Fleet exercises scheduled for the end of the month. Before they began, however, *Somali*'s port bow was damaged when the liner *Sibajak* dragged her anchor and ran into the destroyer during a storm on the 14th. The Mediterranean Tribals took part in the exercises while *Ashanti* and *Eskimo* also came to Gibraltar.

After returning to the UK, *Somali* took *Ashanti*, *Eskimo* and *Matabele* on a visit to Cherbourg. Coming back on 8th May, they met *Tartar*, *Mashona*, *Bedouin* and *Punjabi* – the flotilla was now complete. Their programme of exercises was interrupted on 1st June by the *Thetis* disaster, which sent the 6th DF racing round the coast to the Irish Sea. As was to happen in many later operations, Captain D was the Senior Naval Officer. *Somali* became the salvage headquarters and a number of meetings were held aboard her. Flotilla and fleet exercises followed this melancholy episode.

On 3rd September, the 6th DF was screening British and French battlecruisers

south of Iceland. Two hours after war was declared, *Somali* sighted a vessel on the horizon. She seemed to be flying South American flags, but as the Somalis approached they could see men over the ship's side trying to paint out her name. An officer and eight ratings were sent across to learn that the vessel was the 2,377-ton *Hannah Böge* of Hamburg, with a full cargo of wood pulp from Canada to Germany. *Somali* had captured the first prize in the war at sea.

The boarding party steamed *Hannah Böge* to Kirkwall, arriving there two days later. She was renamed *Crown Arun* and taken into the Merchant Navy. She was eventually torpedoed and sunk by a U-boat off Ireland on 17th September 1940.

On 25/26th September 1939, *Somali* took *Mashona* and *Matabele* to escort the damaged submarine *Spearfish* back to the UK. Covered by the Home Fleet, they experienced their first bombing, but returned safely. Although small compared with later events, it was an efficient and successful operation, and earned royal congratulations when King George VI visited the Home Fleet destroyers early in October. Within a few days *Royal Oak* had been torpedoed and *Somali*, *Mashona*, *Eskimo* and *Ashanti* were hunting an asdic contact in Scapa Flow – a fruitless activity that coincided with the first air raid on the base.

Then began a long winter of patrols and convoys. *Somali* claimed a U-boat on 29/30th October while escorting a Norwegian convoy with *Tartar* and *Ashanti*. They screened capital ships in the Atlantic and hunted the battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. They covered two Canadian troop convoys and searched for U-boats. They had a boiler clean at Rosyth and *Somali*'s harmonica band entertained the patients in the hospital ship *Isle of Jersey*.

This was the period of the Phoney War. There was certainly no rest for the Royal Navy, but it was difficult for correspondents to describe the negative aspects of routine maritime blockade. In any case they were restricted by the necessity for tight security regarding naval movements. Their attempts to make some sort of exciting story out of monotonous and rough sweeps were parodied in the 6th DF's own newspaper, '*Somali* Echo and Tribal Tribune'. Purporting to be written by a reporter, it is a parody which, in its own way, gives a very real picture of the destroyers' activities, and of the attitudes of the men who served in them during this period.

"As some of you may know, and as all the Germans certainly know, the northern base of our great fleet is at Scapa Flow. I went there on a coasting steamer from Wick. Her Captain explained to me that we would not be going straight to the destroyer anchorage as he wanted to land some laundry at Scapa Pier. In order to avoid the long detour necessary by going through the Boob defences – I beg your pardon, that should of course be the Boom Defences – the Captain went in through Kirk Sound. 'Alas,' he said, 'this channel is not so wide as it used to be since they sunk another blockship last week.' He told me that Scapa was very different now from peacetime when it was used mostly by the German trawlers.

"On reaching the other side of the Flow safely, I was met by a high-powered speed boat from the Flotilla Leader. The second time we broke down was conveniently

near the *Iron Duke* and I was able to look down on her quarter deck and see some of the damage done by German pamphlets.

"We covered the two hundred yards to the destroyer in well under three hours and I could see she was straining at the leash to be off. We slipped immediately and I went up to the bridge where I met Captain Nicholson, relentless, grim-faced hunter of U-boats. He told me this was the fifty-seventh variety of destroyer he had commanded, and that he and his crew asked nothing better than to be kept continually at sea. He added that this was just as well, as they would be whether they asked for anything better or not.

"As we approached the Boom, the gates opened to let us through. Captain Nicholson explained that he always used the gate in the daytime, but at night he usually went round the ends. 'After all,' he said, 'we only draw 15 feet and have not more than 36 feet beam.' It was typical of the man that it was left to one of his officers to tell me that the reason was that he was too considerate to wake the personnel of the Boom Defence Vessels, who usually tried to snatch a hurried 12 or 14 hours of well earned sleep during the hours of darkness.

"After my experiences with the Dover Patrol, about which I gave such an interesting talk this time last week, I was anticipating a day in the Pentland Firth, and it came as rather a shock to me to learn that our destination was to be the Arctic Circle. However, by the end of the third day the sea got a little calmer and I was able to keep down some brandy, which was brought to me in my bed, I'm sorry, I mean 'bunk'.

"Lying there, I was able to picture some of the difficulties with which those stern, tight-lipped, bearded sailors have to contend. Gales, tides of 16 knots, convoys of $5\frac{1}{2}$ knots, weevil biscuits and salt pork – 'Sons of the Sea', to be sure.

"When I got up at the end of the month it was to find myself once more in Scapa Flow, looking anxiously forward to my return to London. Ah, how different for the men I was leaving. As the First Lieutenant threw me over the side into a waiting drifter he said, 'Before you reach the shore we shall be gone again.' True words, bravely spoken, and as I set foot once more on the dear land, I looked round just in time to see the great Destroyer Leader slipping out once more round the end of the boom in the fading light. My thoughts will be ever with them, but thank goodness I am not."

Only a few people really appreciated and understood what the Royal Navy was doing at this time. 'Aunty May' was one of those people. She was a wealthy American lady whose real name was Mrs D. C. Hanrahan. Determined not to remain neutral, she adopted *Somali* and sent the destroyer's crew thick winter clothing, chocolate, sweets, cigarettes and personal gifts.

When she heard that *Somali* was the 6th DF leader, she adopted the rest of the flotilla. When she learned that there were other Tribals in service, she adopted them as well. Comforts arrived by the crateful at regular intervals, packed by herself and her husband, a US destroyer captain of the First World War. Food parcels were sent to

Tribesmen's relatives. Her homes in New York and London were always open to any of her 'godsons', who only knew her as 'Aunty May'.

After the war, this generous-hearted lady was piped aboard *Tartar* at Devonport. She met her surviving 'godsons' and their wives and they presented her with a silver model of a Tribal-class destroyer. 'Auntie May' died in 1953.

Somali's engines ran smoothly for most of this rough, monotonous winter, but she did not escape the turbine and feed-water troubles that afflicted the other Tribals. By the end of January 1940, she had had to go to Smith's Dock at Middlesbrough for repairs. She was also degaussed and it was not until the middle of March, that she was able to rejoin the Home Fleet. As compensation for returning to Scapa, the film 'Dawn Patrol' was screened on board on the 16th. Everyone enjoyed the realistic sound-effects until the air-combat sequences were followed by a love scene. The sound-effects continued unabated and everyone suddenly realised that a real air raid was in progress. The entire ship's company immediately took part in what was described as a variety turn entitled 'We Dive-Bomb at Dusk'.

By now German iron-ore ships were regularly using Norwegian territorial waters to avoid the RN's blockade. British destroyers tried to capture German merchantmen if they strayed outside these limits, but interceptions were rare; the German captains kept their ships too close inshore. For example, on the morning of 22nd March, *Somali* found the 736-ton steamer *Butt* very near Obrestad. A shell across her bows landed in Norway, and the enemy ship escaped.

Somali was with *Afridi* and the other Tribals when *Gurkha*'s loss heralded a campaign of almost continuous air attacks. From 11th to 17th April, *Somali* was one of the destroyers which investigated Norwegian fiords for suitable landing places for an Allied Expeditionary Force. Captain Nicholson was SNO at Namsos and for much of the time *Somali* acted as General Carton De Wiart's headquarters. Although *Somali* avoided all the bombs aimed at her, so many nearmisses caused a number of defects. Repairs were quickly carried out and at the end of the month *Somali*, *Mashona*, *Tartar* and *Sikh* took part in the evacution from Andalsnes.

Farther north operations were still being conducted against the Germans in Narvik. If the Allies could capture it they would deny the use of this ice-free iron-ore port to the Germans – the original aim of Allied strategy even before the beginning of the Norwegian Campaign. Although the Navy commanded the waters in the area, the Germans had not been dislodged by landings in Ofotfiord nor by bombardment of Narvik itself. Now a determined effort was to be made to outflank the German positions by a landing at Bjervik in Herjangsfiord.

Somali arrived at Harstad with a troop convoy on 8th May and at 2100 on the 12/13th *Somali*, *Havelock* and *Fame* led *Vindictive*, *Protector*, *Wren*, *Basilisk*, *Effingham*, *Aurora* and *Resolution* into Ofotfiord. The Foreign Legion was embarked off Ballengen, and by 2340 the warships were a mile off Bjerkvik. The Germans in Narvik did not fire at the vessels as they passed, but concentrated on wrecking the harbour installations, believing they were about to be assaulted. The Luftwaffe did not interfere as their airfields were still shrouded in darkness while the high-latitude of

Narvik provided a half-light for the attack. In any case *Ark Royal* supplied air cover.

Somali was one of the bombarding ships, firing at every likely machine-gun position along the shore. As all the houses were wooden every hit started a fire and the blaze soon spread through the village until the church blew up, showing that the Germans were using it as an ammunition store. Once *Somali* ceased fire when she saw women and children running from one house, but she was ordered to continue the bombardment. Meanwhile the troops were going ashore, but it was not until the few tanks involved reached the beach, that the machine-gun fire was finally silenced at about 0700. By evening the town had been cleared and captured. The next stage in the siege of Narvik could be considered.

The Germans had not been idle. Their main army was advancing steadily northwards through Norway, and the British C-in-C decided to reinforce the troops at Bodo and Mo. *Somali* and *Foudroyant* (a French destroyer) were therefore despatched from Harstad on the 14th with ammunition and Brigadier Fraser (to assess the situation personally). They called at Bodo and then went on to Mo. *Foudroyant* patrolled the mouth of the fiord, while *Somali* went right up to Mo. The ammunition was unloaded, some of *Somali*'s own shells directed at Finneid and then the two destroyers made for Harstad. They had been at action stations for about twenty-four hours.

En route they learned that the troopship *Chrobry* had been bombed, was burning and sinking. *Stork* and *Wolverine* were already taking off the Irish Guards on board, but *Somali* and *Foudroyant* also steered to help.

Now they became targets for German bombers. Zigzagging at high speed, they avoided every bomb – except the last. It was not quite a nearmiss. It hit *Somali* on the waterline under her starboard anchor. The destroyer dived, water swept over her bridge – and she righted herself. Her engines were undamaged, but speed was immediately reduced, lest she drive herself under. The bulkhead was shored up and *Somali* returned to the UK at 10 knots. *Foudroyant* remained in company as far as Scapa and then *Somali* made for Liverpool alone.

Repairs and a refit, which included mounting twin 4in AA guns in 'X' position, were not completed until 1st September. *Somali* again became leader of the 6th DF and spent most of the winter of 1940/41 screening Home Fleet sweeps. Captain Caslon was SNO during the Lofoten Islands Commando Raid on 4th March 1941, *Bedouin*, *Eskimo* and *Tartar* also taking part. Then on the 7th May *Somali* captured and sank the trawler *Munchen* north-east of Jan Mayen, a prize which yielded valuable documents.

The next big event in *Somali*'s career began on 22nd May when she left the Clyde with *Eskimo*, *Tartar* and *Mashona* escorting *Rodney* and *Britannic* across the Atlantic. On the 24th they learned that *Bismarck* was out and *Rodney*, *Somali*, *Tartar* and *Mashona* were diverted to intercept. *Somali* ran short of fuel first and was ordered back to base, thus missing the final cornering of the quarry.

Most of June and July was spent in refitting at Thornycroft's Yard at Southampton. Her hull was strengthened, her after funnel cut down and radar equipment installed, the work being completed on 30th July. *Somali* was now ready for another hard

winter's service in the North Atlantic and Arctic, but first she had a VIP assignment.

On 4th August, the battleship *Prince of Wales* slipped out of Scapa Flow bearing Mr Winston Churchill to his Atlantic Charter meeting with President Roosevelt in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. The destroyer escort included *Somali*, but on the second day the weather was so rough that the destroyers were sent back at 25° west. *Prince of Wales* continued alone at high speed.

More fleet screening followed *Somali*'s return to Scapa, the Home Fleet base alternating between Iceland and the Orkneys. During this period action was rare, although in October, *Somali*, *Ashanti*, *Bedouin*, *Eskimo*, *Matabele* and *Punjabi* screened a carrier strike on Bodo.

On 8th December, *Somali* wore a Soviet flag in honour of Mr Maisky (the Russian Ambassador) who travelled in her from Invergordon to Scapa. Mr Anthony Eden, who was also in the party proclaimed *Somali* in his memoirs as "a fine ship". At Scapa the passengers transferred to *Kent* and went on to Russia.

At Christmas 1941, *Somali*, *Ashanti*, *Bedouin* and *Eskimo* took part in another raid on the Lofoten Islands. This time a much longer stay was envisaged, but the force had to withdraw after the Luftwaffe took too great an interest in their activities.

Somali was escorting PQ8 when *Matabele* was lost on 17th January 1942, but she was unable to avenge her sister ship. It was then back to Iceland and more Home Fleet sweeps. Later *Somali* was docked at Hull for repairs which were completed on 28th March. She rejoined the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow three days later.

By now regular convoys were being run to Russia in spite of increasing German opposition. *Somali* left Hvalfiord escorting PQ15 on 26th April. She went into Seidisfiord to fuel next day and then caught up the convoy again. On the 28th, the escorts topped up their tanks from two accompanying oilers. The weather was fair until the 30th when snow showers began sweeping across the convoy.

The first air attack came at 2200 on 1st May, when six Ju88s were driven off. The cruiser *London* left the convoy and *Nigeria* followed twelve hours later. *Somali* closed the homeward-bound convoy QP11 for news of conditions farther east, and at 2000 PQ15 encountered a submarine. It was promptly destroyed by *St Albans* and *Seagull*, but it proved to be the Polish submarine *Jastrzab* out of position. This was not the only tragic accident connected with PQ15; *Punjabi* was sunk in collision with *King George V* while screening the convoy.

At 0130, six He111s took a hand. Their torpedoes sank the merchant ships *Botavon* and *Jutland* and blew up *Cape Corso*. Three of the attackers were shot down, as was a Ju88 taking part in an unsuccessful afternoon raid.

PQ15 arrived at Murmansk on the 5th. There was an air raid every day until *Somali*, *Matchless*, *Foresight* and *Forester* left again on the 13th. They were escorting the cruiser *Trinidad*, damaged by her own torpedo during an earlier action against German destroyers. Her maximum speed was 18 knots and long-range Russian fighters could only stay overhead for 45 minutes.

The lonely force was sighted by a German reconnaissance plane on the 14th. Twenty-five Ju88s attacked and missed at 2200. Ten He111 torpedo-bombers failed

at 2235. Ten minutes later a single bomb from a Ju88 struck *Trinidad*, starting uncontrollable fires. At midnight the destroyers went alongside to take off the survivors before the fatal flames drove them into the icy sea. *Somali* embarked Rear-Admiral Bonham-Carter and Captain Saunders and then *Matchless* sank *Trinidad* with two torpedoes.

Early in June, *Somali* was chosen to take King George VI from Thurso to visit the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow. It was intended that he should return to Thurso in *Somali* at the end of the visit, so three brand-new films were sent to the ship. Bad weather forced the cancellation of these arrangements and so *Somali*'s cine-projector never had 'By Appointment' painted on its side. However, the Somalis did have three new films to sit through – a rare treat for destroyers in 1942.

By now *Somali*, *Ashanti*, *Tartar* and *Eskimo* were the last Home Fleet Tribals left. *Somali* took part in PQ17 and then the narrowly successful Pedestal convoy to Malta. Ships and men were getting very, very tired. Captain Eaton fell ill and had to be temporarily relieved.

The nights were getting longer and it was time for the Russian convoys to start sailing again. In September, *Somali* left Scapa Flow to join the escort of PQ18, for an appointment with U-70 and her death in the bitter waters of the Arctic.

Commanding Officers

Capt R. S. G. Nicholson, DSC, RN 1st December 1938 – 24th May 1940.
Cdr L. P. Skipwith, RN 25th May 1940 – 4th September 1940.
Capt C. Caslon, RN 5th September 1940 – 25th July 1941.
Capt D. K. Bain, RN 5th August 1941 – 22nd March 1942.
Capt J. W. M. Eaton, DSO, DSC, RN 23rd March 1942 – 30th July 1942.
Cdr E. N. V. Currey, DSC, RN 31st July 1942 – 1st September 1942
Lt-Cdr C. D. Maud, DSC, RN 2nd September 1942 – 24th September 1942.

Pennant Numbers

L33 November 1938 – December 1938
F33 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G33 Autumn 1940 – September 1942

HMS Tartar

Ninth of name

Builders: Swan Hunter, Wigham Richardson, Wallsend
Engined by: Wallsend Slipway
Ordered: June 1936
Laid Down: 26th August 1936
Launched: 21st October 1937 (by Countess Roberts)
Commissioned: 10th March 1939

Her flotilla mates called her 'Lucky *Tartar*'. She had her problems and her misfortunes and her periods of great danger, but she came through them all. Of course there was no danger involved in her pre-war activities – escorting *Empress of Australia* down-Channel, standing by *Thetis* and carrying out flotilla and fleet exercises – although it was bad luck for her captain who fell ill in October. Nor did the outbreak of war bring violent action, although it added to the perils of the sea.

At first there was only the monotonous routine of fleet screening, interspersed with an occasional high-speed dash to hunt a U-boat reported miles away. Sometimes they actually overran a contact, as on 29/30th October 1939 when *Somali*, *Ashanti* and *Tartar* were escorting a southbound Norwegian convoy off Scotland. Sometimes there were reports that *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were at sea, and then the entire Home Fleet would go hurrying out to intercept them – always in vain.

Such high-speed work in appalling weather severely strained the destroyers and their crews. By early 1940 *Tartar* needed degaussing and repairs to her feed-water tanks, this work being done at Greenock. Returning to the Clyde for a boiler clean on 3rd March, *Tartar* was told to stand clear of the departing convoy. This proved to be the liner *Queen Elizabeth* on her secret maiden voyage across the Atlantic. As soon as the giant grey ship had passed, *Tartar* was ordered to catch her up and take command of the escort as far as 30° W. On their way back, *Tartar* and the other destroyers went into Belfast to collect the *SS Mamari*, altered to resemble the aircraft carrier *Hermes*.

It was when the Norwegian Campaign began that *Tartar*'s good luck became apparent. She started off by screening the Home Fleet in company with *Somali*, *Matabele*, *Mashona*, *Burza*, *Blyskawica* and *Grom*. *Tartar* and the three Polish destroyers were detached to seek out the many Allied and neutral ships that were in Norwegian waters. A mixed convoy of forty merchantmen were thus escorted safely to the UK on 11th April.

Tartar, *Burza*, *Blyskawica* and *Grom* were often in company during the succeeding weeks, patrolling the North Sea, escorting troop convoys and penetrating Norwegian

fiords in support of the Army. One bombardment of a German artillery position was entitled Operation Kitbag. Its successful conclusion was marked by the laconic signal "Kitbag stowed."

By the end of April, the Allied troops in Central Norway had to be evacuated. *Tartar* shared in this work, being sent to the blazing town of Molde on 30th April/1st May. There were no British soldiers there, but *Tartar* took off a solitary naval officer who had been acting as base commander. General Ruge, the Norwegian C-in-C, declined to come on board and waited for a ship to take him to Tromso.

After returning to Scapa, *Tartar* then went to Harstad and was based there from 4th to 24th May. She was mainly engaged in screening *Ark Royal* while the carrier provided air cover for the troops ashore and struck at German lines of communications. There were many air raids and a number of ships were damaged or sunk, but not *Tartar*. She seemed to bear a charmed life and for the first time was called 'Lucky *Tartar*'.

After escorting *Ark Royal* on her way to Scapa, *Tartar* returned to Harstad to collect *Sobieski* and *Batory*, laden with troops and the survivors of bombed ships. While escorting these two Polish liners to the UK, *Tartar* lost her rudder, but managed to make Liverpool for repairs and boiler cleaning.

6th June saw *Valiant*, *Tartar*, *Mashona*, *Bedouin* and *Ashanti* covering the final evacuation from Norway. On the 8th, they learned that *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were at sea, but a three-day search only resulted in another German air raid.

On the 20th *Tartar* took *Mashona* and *Maori* to requisition four Swedish destroyers in the Faeroes. It was a difficult and delicate mission, but it was accomplished. Diplomatic arguments developed around the vessels and they were eventually returned, but the Tribals were already back with their fleet screening duties and anti-invasion exercises. On 9th August, *Tartar*, *Punjabi* and *Zulu* escorted *Hood* and *Ark Royal* through the Western Approaches, while later in the month *Tartar* helped take *Illustrious* on her way to the Mediterranean. *Tartar* also escorted troop convoys bound for the Middle East via the Cape, and she was in company with *Bedouin* and *Mashona* when they found a Portuguese lifeboat adrift in the Atlantic.

'X' mounting was replaced by a twin 4in AA in a refit which was carried out at Plymouth from 4th October to 30th November. Then it was back to Scapa Flow for a winter of Home Fleet patrols and escorts in fierce and bitter weather. On 4th March 1941, however, *Somali*, *Eskimo*, *Bedouin* and *Tartar* took part in a successful Commando raid on the Lofoten Islands.

More Home Fleet work followed and on 22nd May, *Somali*, *Eskimo*, *Tartar* and *Mashona* left the Clyde with *Rodney* and *Britannic* on another routine screening duty. This time excitement mounted when it was learned *Bismarck* was at sea. *Rodney*, *Somali*, *Tartar* and *Mashona* were ordered to intercept, but the destroyers ran short of fuel and had to return to base. *Tartar* and *Mashona* were proceeding alone on 28th May, when they experienced a whole series of bombing attacks. 'Lucky *Tartar*' was not touched, but *Mashona* was hit and sunk. *Tartar* picked up survivors from her chummy ship and made for Londonderry.

By now *Tartar* had established two records. She was the first destroyer to spend 200 days at sea in the Second World War, and the first to have run 100,000 nautical miles since the beginning of the war. Relaxation was provided by a lively show aboard *Hecla* on 1st June, when the Tartars and Mashonas were entertained by Evelyn Laye. Then it was back to work.

About this time the Germans began sending weather-reporting trawlers into the North Atlantic. *Tartar* was in one force of cruisers and destroyers which was sent out to intercept these vessels. Being on the port wing of the screen, *Tartar* was the first to sight *Lauenburg* off Jan Mayen on 28th June. *Bedouin* also raced for the prize, but was beaten by Commander Skipwith who later remarked that it was the only time he had gone alongside at 32 knots. Alarmed by target smoke shell bursting overhead, the Germans abandoned ship, save for one man who was responsible for destroying the confidential books. He was not quick enough, and the Tartars were able to seize the German Navy's small ship cyphers – a valuable acquisition for British Intelligence. *Lauenburg* was gutted of all useful and interesting material, and then sunk.

Following the German invasion of Russia the Navy also started to take an interest in the Far North. On 31st July, *Nigeria*, *Aurora*, *Tartar* and *Punjabi* arrived at Spitsbergen to investigate the suitability of the islands as a naval base. They made contact with the Norwegian and Russian settlements there and returned to Scapa Flow after visiting Bear Island.

In August, *Tartar* took part in two VIP missions. Firstly she accompanied *Inglefield* taking King George VI on a visit to Scapa Flow. Then she headed westwards with two US destroyers. On 14th August they met the battleship *Prince of Wales* bringing Mr Winston Churchill back from his Atlantic Charter Meeting with President Roosevelt. Next day they overtook an eastbound convoy of 73 ships, turned around and passed through it again so that Prime Minister and merchantmen could greet each other.

Battleship and escort called at Hvalfiord on the 16th August and arrived at Scapa Flow on the 18th. *Tartar* embarked the Prime Minister's party and took them to Thurso, with Mr Winston Churchill, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound (First Sea Lord), General Sir John Dill (CIGS) and Air Chief Marshal Sir Wilfred Freeman (VCAS), all on her bridge.

Tartar underwent a major refit in London from 2nd September to 17th October. Her mainmast was removed and her after funnel cut down. Radar was installed and the depth-charge throwers resited.

After her return to Scapa Flow, *Tartar* was mainly employed in screening big ships of the Home Fleet providing cover for the early Russian convoys.

After escorting *Cumberland* bringing Sir Stafford Cripps back from Russia, a boiler clean at Scapa Flow on 7th February 1942 provided welcome respite from the violence of the Arctic Seas. Then it was back to escorting PQ11 to Russia and to screening capital ships with *Ashanti*, *Bedouin* and the other Tribals. On the 23rd, the Home Fleet tried to intercept *Admiral Scheer* and *Prinz Eugen* in the North Sea –

without success. A similar attempt to catch *Tirpitz* in March 1942 was also unsuccessful. The heavy weather they encountered battered the destroyers, and many needed repair as well as routine refit. *Tartar* had to be docked at Hull from the beginning of April to early July 1942. Her hull was stiffened although later rough weather resulted in a crack just abaft 'A' mounting.

Tartar joined *Ashanti*, *Eskimo* and *Somali* in escorting the Pedestal Convoy from the UK to Malta. They were assailed by aircraft and U-boats and on 12th August *Foresight* was disabled. *Tartar* took the 1,350-ton destroyer in tow, but they were unable to reach safety as progress was very slow and the ship's state continually deteriorated. Endangered by aircraft and U-boat attack *Tartar* took off *Foresight*'s crew and sank her with a torpedo. She was then several hundred miles from Gibraltar.

Tartar stayed at Gibraltar for a while, returning to the UK with ships of Force H to prepare for Operation Torch. *Eskimo*, *Ashanti* and *Tartar* then sailed from Scapa Flow to cover the North African landings on 8th November. *Tartar* and *Ashanti* attacked a U-boat, but it got away.

Once the armies were established ashore, the Tribals were employed as a striking force against enemy convoys. Action was rare, although on 28/29th April 1943, *Tartar* and *Laforey* engaged a number of E-boats taking supplies into Tunisia. It was believed that one was sunk and others damaged, but the losses were not confirmed.

It was perhaps pleasanter to be out on patrol than to spend the night in Bone. Dense smokescreens afforded some protection during the nightly air raids, and the ships' ventilation was always switched off to prevent choking fumes permeating every compartment. The ship soon became unbearably hot and stifling. Telegraphists in the small wireless room streamed with perspiration, only slightly absorbed by sweat-rags round their necks and towels round their waists.

Things became a little more lively during Operation Retribution, when Allied warships and aircraft prevented enemy forces escaping from Cape Bon. *Laforey*, *Tartar* and *Loyal* sank KT5 and KT21 on 8/9th May, but most of their time was spent in rounding up German and Italian soldiers trying to reach Sicily in small boats.

On 8th June a force of cruisers and destroyers (which included *Nubian* and *Tartar*) shelled Pantelleria. The island's capture followed three days later. *Tartar*, with *Eskimo* and *Nubian*, then took part in the invasion of Sicily. She was often bombed, one stick landing so close to her bows that "the water splashes went right over the ship and for a few moments nobody could see ahead". They rescued the patients, medical staff and crew from the hospital ship *Talamba* and torpedoed and sank the blazing *Baarn*, lest her cargo of ammunition explode. By the end of the campaign 'Lucky *Tartar*' had steamed 200,000 wartime miles without a single casualty.

On 31st August *Tartar* helped screen *Nelson*, *Rodney* and *Orion* in the Straits of Messina during their bombardment of coastal batteries prior to the landings on the Italian mainland. The assault itself went in at Reggio on 2/3rd September and was witnessed by Admiral Cunningham from *Tartar*'s bridge. *Nubian* and *Tartar* then escorted an assault convoy to Salerno. *Tartar* remained off the beaches for the whole operation without a break.

At the end of November she left the Mediterranean and began an extensive refit at Plymouth early in December. The principal alteration was a lattice foremast which carried newer and heavier radar gear. Twin 20mm guns were installed on the bridge wings, and two single 20mm oerlikons replaced the quadruple 0.5in machine-guns. Internal accommodation was also rearranged and on 21st January 1944 *Tartar* completed refitting as leader of the 10th DF, at that time the most powerful destroyer flotilla in the Navy.

Although destroyer striking forces had proved profitable in other theatres, such operations in the English Channel had not so far met with success, and on one occasion had proved disastrous. The 10th DF would be expected to seek out and destroy the enemy at night at high speed in narrow, mine-infested, rock-strewn, treacherous waters. There was no room for mistakes in this warfare. The destroyers must work as a team with utter confidence in their fellows, and yet be prepared to operate completely independently if the need arose.

The responsibility for forging this team and leading it in action fell upon Commander Jones who was Captain D10. The extent of his achievement can be gauged by the principal tasks undertaken by the 10th DF in the English Channel, remembering that between each operation they fuelled, ammunitioned, repaired damage, exercised and prepared for the next foray;

19/20th January: *Ashanti*, *Athabaskan*, *Haida*, *Iroquois* and three Hunts carried out an uneventful convoy-interception patrol (a 'Tunnel').

2/3rd February: *Tartar*, *Ashanti*, *Haida* and *Iroquois* carried out an uneventful 'Tunnel'.

1/2nd March: Radar contact on Elbings, but no engagement resulted.

11th March: *Haida* screened amphibious exercises.

19th March: The 10th DF practised indirect bombardment.

24/25th March: *Athabaskan*, *Haida* and *Huron* took part in an invasion screening exercise off Slapton Sands.

30th March: *Haida* and *Huron* practised gunfire support.

12th April: Minesweeping exercises off the Isle of Wight. *Athabaskan* practised bombardment, while *Tartar*, *Haida* and *Huron* screened the covering force. *Tartar* underwent a short refit after this exercise.

22/23rd April: *Ashanti*, *Athabaskan* and *Haida* screened *Apollo* laying mines off the French coast.

23/24th April: *Ashanti*, *Athabaskan*, *Haida*, *Huron* and *Black Prince* carried out an uneventful 'Tunnel'.

25/26th April: *Ashanti*, *Athabaskan*, *Haida*, *Huron* and *Black Prince* sank T29.

26/27th April: *Athabaskan* and *Haida* covered amphibious exercises.

28/29th April: *Athabaskan* was lost, but *Haida* sank T27.

2/3rd June: *Tartar*, *Ashanti*, *Haida*, *Huron*, *Eskimo*, *Javelin*, *Blyskawica* and *Piorun* began patrolling the Channel to cover the flank of Operation Overlord.

8/9th June: They engaged T24, Z24, Z32 and ZH1. *Tartar* was hit three times.

Her galley and bridge were set on fire, four men were killed and twelve wounded, including Commander Jones. Her mast hung over the side and all the radar and communications went dead. Had *Tartar*'s luck run out?

The wounded people on the bridge were treated in the undamaged Action Information Centre, while damage control parties put out the flames that threatened to engulf the superstructure. She was still 'Lucky *Tartar*'.

Just as the Tartars' training saved their ship, so too the flotilla's teamwork paid off. The other destroyer captains knew what to do and by the end of the night ZH1 and Z32 had been destroyed.

Within a week a new lattice mast had been fitted at Plymouth, but *Tartar* was not ready for action until the beginning of July. Meanwhile, the 10th DF continued its work.

12/13th June: *Haida* and *Huron* carried out a 'spoof' landing on the Cherbourg Peninsula.

13/14th June: *Ashanti* and *Piorun* sank and damaged several minesweepers between the Channel Islands and St Malo. The rest of the 10th DF supported MTBs finishing off the wreck of Z32.

16/17th June: *Haida* and *Huron* investigated two suspicious destroyers, which proved to be friendly.

23/24th June: *Eskimo* and *Haida* on patrol between the Channel Islands and St Malo.

24th June: *Eskimo* and *Haida* moved down-Channel and sank U-971.

26/27th June: The 10th DF encountered several E-boats which were successfully evaded.

27/28th June: *Eskimo* and *Huron* engaged several trawlers and a minesweeper off St Malo.

30th June/1st July: *Ashanti* and *Piorun* successfully engaged three trawlers off the Channel Islands.

1/2nd July: *Tartar*, *Huron*, *Eskimo* and *Javelin* were on patrol off Ushant when *Eskimo* and *Javelin* collided and had to be taken back to Plymouth.

4th July: *Tartar* and *Ashanti* shelled four landing barges in Lannion harbour.

8/9th July: *Tartar* and *Huron* engaged a couple of trawlers off St Malo, but were themselves nearmissed by shore batteries.

13/14th July: *Tartar*, *Haida* and *Blyskawica* patrolled off Lorient without incident.

14/15th July: *Tartar*, *Haida* and *Blyskawica* destroyed a convoy off Lorient.

16th–30th July: The 10th DF carried out three extended patrols in the Bay of Biscay.

31st July–3rd August: *Tartar*, *Ashanti*, *Haida*, *Huron*, *Blyskawica*, *Piorun*, two cruisers, an escort carrier and three other destroyers patrolled from Brest to La Rochelle – without incident.

5/6th August: *Tartar*, *Ashanti*, *Haida*, *Iroquois* and *Bellona* destroyed two convoys off St Nazaire.

6th August: *Iroquois* shared in an anti-submarine sweep at the mouth of the Channel.

14/15th August: *Iroquois*, *Ursa* and *Mauritius* wrecked two convoys between Les Sables and Ile d'Yeu.

20th–23rd August: *Iroquois*, *Ursa* and *Mauritius* carried out an extended patrol in the Bay of Biscay, culminating in the destruction of two convoys.

26th–28th August: *Iroquois*, *Ursa* and *Mauritius* made contact with the FFI on Ile d'Yeu and at St Guenole.

30th–31st August: *Haida* and *Iroquois* escorted *Jeanne D'Arc* into Cherbourg.

4th–6th September: *Haida* and *Kelvin* made contact with the FFI along the Bay of Biscay. Meanwhile, *Iroquois* helped escort the liner *Queen Mary*, taking Mr Churchill across the Atlantic to Quebec, as far as the Azores.

23rd September: *Iroquois* landed an armed party at Les Sables.

30th September: *Iroquois* landed another armed party at Les Sables.

Tartar had a boiler clean at Plymouth from 16th to 20th October and was then employed escorting 'monster' troopships in and out of the Western Approaches. She was based at Milford Haven for this work, but at the end of November she went round to the Humber for a refit which was completed on 10th January 1945.

After working up at Plymouth, *Tartar* set out for the Far East being seen off by the C-in-C. Off the Scilly Isles, she developed shaft trouble and had to crawl back rather shamefacedly at 3–4 knots. Was this bad luck? The Westcountrymen in *Tartar*'s crew did not think so. She sailed for the second time on 8th February and joined *Eskimo* and *Nubian* in the Indian Ocean.

The Tribals screened bombardment and carrier forces and tried to intercept the Japanese cruiser *Haguro*. Other destroyers accomplished this task, but the 10th DF accounted for *Kuroshio Maru* and subchaser No. 57. *Tartar* helped to cover mine-sweeping operations at Penang and was present at its surrender. Later she visited Singapore to bring back released POWs. *Tartar* and *Nubian* returned to the UK in November 1945.

Tartar was at Devonport being used as an accommodation ship when 'Aunty May' visited her. Mrs Hanrahan was piped aboard and a silver model Tribal was presented to her by Captain Jones.

'Lucky *Tartar*' had come through six years of the hardest destroyer work virtually unscathed, but she could not escape the breaker's yard. She arrived at Newport, Monmouthshire, for scrapping on 22nd February 1948.

Commanding Officers

Capt G. H. Warner, DSC, RN 27th February 1939 – 13th October 1939.
Lt-Cdr D. E. Holland-Martin, RN 13th October 1939 – 19th January 1940.
Cdr L. P. Skipwith, RN 20th January 1940 – 24th May 1940.
Capt R. S. G. Nicholson, DSO, DSC, RN 25th May 1940 – 28th May 1940.

Capt C. Caslon, RN 29th May 1940 – 4th September 1940.
Cdr L. P. Skipwith, RN 5th September 1940 – 16th February 1942.
Cdr R. T. White, DSO, RN 17th February 1942 – 27th April 1942.
Cdr St. J. R. Tyrwhitt, RN 5th June 1942 – 14th March 1944.
Cdr B. Jones, DSO, DSC, RN 15th March 1944 – December 1945.
Lt P. W. B. Ashmore, DSC, RN December 1945 – March 1946.

Pennant Numbers

F43 February 1939 – Autumn 1940
G43 Autumn 1940 – February 1948

HMAS Warramunga

First of name

Builders: Cockatoo Docks & Engineering Pty, Sydney
Engined by: Cockatoo Docks & Engineering Pty, Sydney
Laid Down: 10th February 1940
Launched: 7th February 1941
Commissioned: 20th November 1942

WARRAMUNGA'S CAREER, like that of her sistership *Arunta*, almost reads like a history of the war in the South-West Pacific. Like *Arunta* she saw her first action in Australian waters soon after her working-up.

On 10th February 1943, the US liberty ship *Starr King* was torpedoed by the Japanese submarine I-21 150 miles east of Sydney. By the time *Warramunga* arrived in the early afternoon, *Starr King* was awash from the bridge aft. Her crew had abandoned ship, but they reboarded her while *Warramunga* tried to take the 7,176-ton ship in tow. It was no use. *Starr King*'s crew were taken off again and she sank at 0230 on the 11th.

Arunta and *Warramunga* spent March and April on convoy escort between Queensland and New Guinea, but in May, they joined TF74 in the Coral Sea. Patrols and more escorts followed, and at the beginning of July they covered the Woodlark and Kiriwina landings. Further escort work included taking *Hobart* from Espiritu Santo to Sydney for repairs to torpedo damage. On 5th November, *Arunta* and *Warramunga* rejoined TF74 and from then on they played an important part in almost all the South-West Pacific landings.

After shelling Gasmata on 29/30th November, they patrolled off Arawe on 15th December and then provided gunfire support at Cape Gloucester on 26th December. Next objective was Saidor, assaulted on 2nd January 1944 and then *Warramunga* sailed for refit at Sydney.

On her return she took Admiral Sir Guy Royle on a tour of New Guinea bases. She shared in the Manus landing, being involved in the associated operations until 27th March. *Warramunga* was included in the force that captured Humboldt Bay on 22nd April, and on 17th May, the two Tribals shelled Sarmi and Samar. 25th to 29th May saw them covering the Biak landing. TF74 drove off air attacks on 4th June, while on 8/9th June the group fought an action against enemy destroyers and barges.

A four-hour bombardment of Kamiri airstrip on 2nd July prepared the way for the Noemfoor landing, but the Japanese at Wewak suddenly launched a sharp counter-offensive against Allied positions at Aitape. The destroyer carried out a number of interdiction bombardments at targets inland from 13th to 22nd July. The

also worked with PT boats in sinking Japanese barges trying to work their way along the coast.

After a refit at Sydney, TF74 reassembled at Milne Bay at the end of August. Morotai was next on the list, the Tribals screening a cruiser bombardment of Cape Gila. *Warramunga* accounted for two Japanese barges during this operation.

The stage had now been set for General MacArthur's return to the Philippines, and on 20th October US troops landed in Leyte Gulf. *Arunta* and *Warramunga* were there and encountered the first Kamikaze attacks. *Warramunga* was later ordered to help escort the damaged cruisers *Australia* and *Honolulu* back to Manus, arriving there on 27th October. She thus missed the Battle for Leyte Gulf, but returned to the Philippines for the rest of the Kamikaze-ridden campaign. She did her best to save *Brooks* after the old destroyer transport had been hit by a suicide aircraft in Lingayen Gulf on 6th January 1945. *Brooks* did not sink, but she was so battered that she had to be scrapped. *Arunta* and *Warramunga* stayed with the Lingayen Gulf forces until late in January and were then concerned with the capture of Corregidor in February.

Warramunga continued general destroyer duties around the Philippines for the rest of February and early March. On 26th March she covered the landing on Cebu and at the end of April, took part in the Tarakan landing. The Dove Bay landing in May was *Warramunga*'s last before a welcome refit at Sydney.

Warramunga, now joined by her new sistership *Bataan*, rejoined TF74 in Subic Bay on 26th July. They were both present at the official Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay on 2nd September and were afterwards employed on the relief of released POWs and internees.

At the end of the war, *Warramunga*'s close range AA armament comprised six single 40mm bofors and a quadruple pompom mounting. She retained this armament during the post-war years, although a lattice foremast subsequently replaced the tripod. Peacetime exercises, cruises and refits were interrupted in 1950 by the Korean War.

Bataan was already off Korea when *Warramunga* left Sydney to join her on 6th August. The two Australian Tribals spent most of their time screening carriers off the west coast where they met the RCN Tribals. *Warramunga* and *Athabaskan* were in company so often that they became chummy ships, screening the Inchon landings, patrolling inshore, and helping Korean villagers. In October *Warramunga* and *Athabaskan* represented their respective countries in the UN force which landed at Wonsan, but the following month they were back patrolling off the west coast.

Cayuga, *Athabaskan*, *Bataan* and *Warramunga* took part in the Chinnampo evacuation in December, although *Warramunga* ran aground and her contribution was restricted to guarding the exit from the narrow channel. On 29th December *Warramunga* helped support the army on the Kumpo Peninsula, but the Chinese broke through and forced the evacuation of Inchon.

Warramunga spent the early months of 1951 screening carriers off both east and west coasts. *Bataan* returned to Australia for refit in June, but *Warramunga* continued

her carrier screening duties. On 5th August she shelled Haeju and then sailed for Australia.

Bataan and *Warramunga* were back in Korean waters early in 1952. On 25th April *Warramunga* screened *Iowa*'s bombardment of Chongjin, and also carried out her own interdiction patrols along the railway. In July, *Warramunga* joined *Bataan* in the Yellow Sea, screening carriers, with regular inshore patrols and occasional bombardments.

In November 1952, *Warramunga* began conversion to an anti-submarine destroyer. A twin 40mm mounting replaced the quadruple 2pdr, while a triple-barrelled squid was mounted in 'Y' position. Her after superstructure was extended to accommodate the extra gear and personnel and her standard displacement rose to 2,200 tons.

This refit was completed on 5th October 1954, and for the next five years *Warramunga* exercised and cruised with the other ships of the RAN. By 1960 she had been placed in reserve, and was scheduled for disposal in 1962. She was sold to a Japanese firm for breaking up in January 1963 and later began her last voyage from Sydney under tow.

Commanding Officers

Cdr E. F. V. Dechaineux, DSC, RAN October 1942 – 5th March 1944
Cdr N. A. MacKinnon, RAN 6th March 1944 – 19th October 1944.
Lt-Cdr J. M. Alliston, DSC, RAN 20th October 1944 – December 1944
Cdr M. J. Clark, DSC, RAN December 1944 – October 1946
Cdr G. C. Oldham, DSC, RAN 2nd December 1946 – 29th April 1948.
Capt W. H. Harrington, DSO, RAN 30th April 1948 – December 1949
Capt A. W. R. McNicholl, GM, RAN January 1950 – October 1950.
Cdr O. H. Becher, DSC, RAN October 1950 – 24th October 1951
Cdr J. M. Ramsay, RAN 25th October 1951 – November 1952
Cdr L. M. Hinchcliffe, DSC, RAN 5th October 1954 – 15th May 1955
Cdr I. K. Purvis, RAN 16th May 1955 – 1st July 1956
Cdr A. M. Synnot, RAN 2nd July 1956 – 20th November 1957.
Cdr M. L. Molony, RAN 21st November 1957 – 31st May 1959.
Cdr A. A. Willis, RAN 1st June 1959 – 7th December 1959.

Pennant Numbers

I44 October 1942 – January 1952
D123 February 1952 – 1963

HMS Zulu

Second of name

Builders: Alexander Stephen, Govan
Engined by: Alexander Stephen, Govan
Ordered: 10th March 1936
Laid Down: 10th August 1936
Launched: 23rd September 1937 (by Mrs F. Sturrock)
Commissioned: 6th September 1938

THERE WAS always something different about *Zulu*. Perhaps being launched with boilers and funnels in place makes a happy ship. Perhaps her crew were determined that their ship, alphabetically last, should not be least in the class. Whatever the reason, *Zulu* started a happy and contented ship and remained so.

After running progressive trials, after the usual working-up, and after waiting for her armament to be completed, *Zulu* sailed for the Mediterranean. She arrived at Malta on 18th November 1938, joined *Afridi* and the 1st Tribal DF. The 1939 spring exercises at Gibraltar were followed by independent cruising in the Western Mediterranean. *Zulu*'s visit to St Maxime was spoilt when a midshipman was lost after his dinghy capsized, while Italy's invasion of Albania at Easter forced the cancellation of the rest of the cruising programme.

Most of the summer was spent in fleet and flotilla exercises in the Eastern Mediterranean, although *Cossack*'s division did accompany the C-in-C to Istanbul. Meanwhile preparations for war were being speeded up, and when hostilities began, *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Zulu* and *Nubian* were employed on convoy escort and contraband control.

In October 1939, the 8th Division returned to the UK. On arrival they were immediately employed on east coast convoy escort, and were approaching Rosyth on the 16th, when they experienced their first air raid. *Mohawk* was badly damaged.

There were several more east coast convoys, but *Zulu* spent most of the winter farther north screening Home Fleet sweeps or escorting Norwegian convoys. She depth-charged two suspicious asdic contacts one afternoon, helped *Cossack* after her collision and picked up the crew from a blazing aircraft which crashed near by.

In February 1940 she developed turbine trouble and had to be drydocked for repairs at Leith. She was also degaussed and returned to service on 9th March.

Zulu had been given a part to play in Plan R4 – the projected landing in Norway which would forestall German reaction to Operation Wilfred. It was intended that

Zulu should be one of the destroyers accompanying *Devonshire* to Bergen. The destroyers would break the boom so that the cruiser could enter the harbour and disembark her troops. As it happened, Germany invaded Norway first and the Home Fleet put to sea.

Kelvin and *Kashmir* collided on 8th April. *Cossack* took *Kashmir* in tow, while *Zulu* provided anti-submarine protection. Half-way to Lerwick, *Zulu* attacked U-99, but the U-boat escaped. Having seen their charges safely into Lerwick, the two Tribals rejoined the forces patrolling off Northern Norway.

Zulu was based at Skelfiord and Harstad from 14th April onwards. She carried out patrols in Vestfiord and went right up into Ofotfiord to harass the Germans in Narvik. There was little or no opposition from shore batteries there, so it was hoped that a powerful bombardment would persuade the isolated garrison to surrender. So, on the 24th, *Effingham*, *Warspite*, *Aurora*, *Enterprise* and *Zulu* shelled Narvik for three hours. A pier, dock sheds, a radio station, a ferry boat, locomotives, rolling stock and military stores were destroyed, but thick snow prevented the identification of machine-gun positions. As it had to be presumed these were still intact, and as the Germans showed no intention of surrendering, a proposed landing had to be called off. (The orders stipulated that there was not to be an opposed landing.)

Zulu was then engaged in screening *Ark Royal* while the carrier struck at Trondheim and other targets in Norway. The ships were often subjected to air attack and *Zulu* experienced many nearmisses. As an interlude during one raid, she rescued the crew of a ditched Swordfish so smartly that they clambered up the side without getting their feet wet.

This series of operations was concluded on 28th April and *Zulu* then busied herself with assisting British troops landing on the shores of Ofotfiord.

By now the Germans were occupying the whole of Norway from Namsos southward and were still holding out in Narvik. They now planned another landing, this time half-way up the fiord-indented coast towards Narvik. 300 troops were embarked in the 991-ton coastal passenger steamer *Nord-Norge* and taken to Hemnesberget to cut off the British troops retreating towards Mo from Mosjoen.

Norwegian coastwatchers reported the move, and the British Naval HQ at Harstad ordered *Zulu* to sail and meet the cruiser *Calcutta*. They arrived off Ranfiord at 1700 on 10th May, but were too late to intercept *Nord-Norge*.

Covered by two Dornier flying-boats, the German troops went ashore and drove out the British platoon in Hemnesberget. Two mountain guns were also unloaded, but at 2230 *Calcutta* and *Zulu* arrived. *Nord-Norge* was hit and sunk alongside the quay, flames from burning petrol, tyres and ammunition setting the little town ablaze. Unfortunately German flying-boats ferried in more stores during the next few days and soon the soldiers were firmly established. The British and Norwegian troops cut off at Mosjoen had to be evacuated via Vefsenfiord. Soon the garrison at Mo also had to retreat or be withdrawn. *Zulu* embarked about 150 soldiers who were without food and ammunition, and took them to the Clyde.

Zulu was now attached to the Home Fleet capital ships and, from 5th to 12th June,

shared with *Tartar*, *Maori*, *Mashona*, *Bedouin* and *Ashanti* in covering the final evacuation from Norway. *Scharnhorst* had been damaged during her onslaught on *Glorious* and had put into Trondheim for temporary repairs. *Ark Royal*'s Skuas divebombed the battlecruiser on 13th June, but without crippling her further. *Zulu* was one of the carriers screening destroyers and was later given the task of escorting *Electra* back to Troon after her collision with *Antelope*. *Zulu* then returned to Scapa Flow, arriving there on the 22nd.

A welcome boiler clean at Rosyth was followed by a refit on the Tyne when twin 4in AA guns were installed in 'X' position. *Zulu*, along with the other Tribals, spent August and September on Home Fleet sweeps, anti-submarine patrols and anti-invasion exercises. The coming of autumn eased the invasion tension and brought the chance of offensive action, but *Zulu* was unable to join *Cossack*, *Ashanti*, *Sikh* and *Maori* in their attack on a German convoy off Norway on 13/14th October. *Zulu* had been disabled by an acoustic mine and was under repair at Rosyth until 18th January 1941.

For the next few months, *Cossack*, *Maori*, *Sikh* and *Zulu* were mainly employed on escorting convoys in and out of the Western Approaches. They were with such a convoy on 26th May when they were ordered to join the C-in-C. The 4th DF thus shared in the destruction of the German battleship *Bismarck*. After the excitement of this chase, they returned to Home Fleet work and then to their Western Approaches escort duties.

Zulu began a refit at Falmouth in June. Her after funnel was cut down and her mainmast replaced by a H/F-D/F installation. Two single 2pdr guns were mounted on the bridge wings, radar installed and the depth-charge throwers resited. The refit was completed on 26th July.

In August and September, *Cossack* and *Zulu* escorted the Halberd convoy from the UK to Malta. *Zulu* was then attached to Force H at Gibraltar for most of the next year. At the beginning of 1942 she went to Malta, forming, with *Sikh* and *Maori*, a surface striking force against Axis supply convoys. On 7/8th February *Zulu* and *Lively* sank *Aosta* and *Grongo*, but the German air offensive soon rendered Malta untenable as a base. After 13/14th February, when *Zulu* unsuccessfully tried to tow the disabled freighter *Rowallan Castle* into Malta, *Sikh* and *Zulu* were withdrawn to Alexandria.

Zulu helped escort the drifter *Ocean Spray* into Tobruk, protected *Cleopatra*'s move to Alexandria and shelled Rhodes. Later in March, *Sikh* and *Zulu* took part in the 2nd Battle of Sirte. Repairs to substantial weather damage suffered in this action kept *Zulu* in dock until May. June saw the abortive Vigorous convoy to Malta and then Rommel's desert offensive forced the abandonment of Alexandria as the Mediterranean Fleet's main base.

The loss of *Medway* during this move demonstrated the intense loyalty felt by the Zulus for their ship. An ex-Zulu who had been drafted to *Medway* was so keen to rejoin his old ship that he turned away from the vessel picking him up, and swam off towards *Zulu* a quarter of a mile away.

For the next couple of months *Sikh* and *Zulu* carried out a series of anti-submarine sweeps in the Eastern Mediterranean, resulting in the destruction of U-372 on 4th August. Later in the month they took a decoy convoy towards Malta to try to relieve pressure on the Pedestal convoy approaching the island from Gibraltar.

Sikh and *Zulu*'s final operation together was the attack on Tobruk on 13/14th September. Security ashore was bad, and the complicated plan broke down. *Sikh* was disabled and had to be left behind, but *Zulu* was still able to make 30 knots, although she had been hit by the coastal batteries. Her crew had been at full stretch since dusk on 13th and had been fighting a battle since 0500 on 14th. Daylight did not bring rest.

The first aircraft, a Ju88, arrived at 0850. Its bomb missed by 80 yards, but *Zulu*'s gunners believed they had hit the plane. At 1000 *Zulu* altered course slightly to investigate a suspicious vessel, but it turned out to be a hospital ship.

1116: All bombs from seven Ju88s missed.

1234: Six Ju88s carried out a divebombing attack. They missed, but similar attacks on Force D, still some distance away, had disabled *Coventry*. Commander White was ordered to sink her in passing, as *Zulu* was the only ship in the area carrying torpedoes.

1430: Four Ju88s and five Ju87s divebombed *Zulu*. All missed.

1445: *Zulu* met the Hunts of Force D who covered her while she reduced speed to 12 knots to fire torpedoes at *Coventry*. Four Ju87s and one Ju88 attacked them and missed.

1505: *Coventry* was hit by two torpedoes and sank. Six Ju87s divebombed *Zulu*, but all missed. By now the destroyers were doing 25 knots, the Hunts' maximum speed.

1600: Six Ju87s and twelve Ju88s made a simultaneous attack from all directions. The last bomb pierced *Zulu*'s side and exploded in the engine-room, flooding it along with No. 3 boiler-room and the gearing-room. *Zulu* stopped dead and settled two feet deeper. *Croome* came alongside to take off all the Royal Marines and the Zulus, except for a towing party. They rigged a manila rope so that *Hursley* could take her in tow.

Presently it parted and *Hursley* had to rig her own wire. Another air attack was driven off by all the ships including *Zulu* whose towing party rushed to man her pompoms and oerlikons.

By 1900 *Zulu* was only a hundred miles from Alexandria, but she was sinking fast. After another strafing pass by enemy aircraft, *Hursley* cast off the tow and *Croome* closed to take off the towing party. Suddenly *Zulu* rolled to starboard and sank. Those in the water were picked up, but twelve had been killed, one wounded and twenty-seven were missing, including some left behind at Tobruk.

Commanding Officers

Cdr J. S. Crawford, RN 15th February 1938 – 13th January 1941.
Cdr H. R. Graham, DSO, RN 14th January 1941 – 27th April 1942.
Cdr R. T. White, DSO, RN 28th April 1942 – 14th September 1942.

Pennant Numbers

L18 July 1938 – December 1938
F18 January 1939 – Autumn 1940
G18 Autumn 1940 – September 1942

The Tribals

"THEY WERE good ships all right but it was the men that mattered. You don't know what it was like, what with the cold and the wet and all. Sometimes, every time you jumped out of your hammock you'd land in water up to your knees. You were cold and wet and tired and hungry and scared and sick. You were always being thrown about. Sometimes you couldn't stand upright for weeks on end. It was awful. And you'd think 'I'll never go back. When I get home on leave I'll desert, I'll never go back to this.' And when you were on leave, at home, and it was almost up, you'd think of your mates, and you'd think 'I can't let them down', – and you'd go back."

Name	*Displacement Tons*	*Overall length ft ins*	*Beam ft ins*	*Draught ft ins*	*SHP*	*Speed Knots*	*Armament*	*Complement*	*Cost*
Afridi*	2,244 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,720 T	34.879 T	ORIGINAL	226	£513,804
Arunta	1,927 S	377 6	36 6	9 0 S	44,000 D	34 D	6 4.7in (3×2) 2 4in (1×2) 4 2pdr (1×4) 6 20mm (6×1)	250	—
Ashanti*	2,020 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	45,031 T	37.3 T	ORIGINAL	190	£513,112
Athabaskan	1,990 T	377 0	37 6	15 0 F	44,000 D	30 T	6 4.7in (3×2) 2 4in (1×2) 4 2pdr (1×4) 12 20mm (6×2)	254	—
Athabaskan	1,927 S	377 0	37 6	13 0 F	44,000 D	36 D	8 4in (4×2) 4 40mm (4×1) 4 20mm (2×2)	240	—
Bataan	1,970 S 2,675 F	377 6	36 6	15 0 F	44,000 D	34 D	6 4.7in (3×2) 2 4in (1×2) 4 2pdr (1×4) 6 40mm (6×1)	250	—
Bedouin*	2,035 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,522 T	37.4 T	ORIGINAL	213	£512,742

Name	*Displacement Tons*	*Overall length ft ins*	*Beam ft ins*	*Draught ft ins*	*SHP*	*Speed Knots*	*Armament*	*Complement*	*Cost*
Cayuga	1,927 S 2,745 F	377 0	37 6	13 0 F	44,000 D	36.5 D	8 4in (4×2) 10 20mm (4×2, 2×1); 1 DCC	240	—
Cossack*	2,030 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,430 T	36.2 T	ORIGINAL	219	£513,428
Eskimo*	1,987 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	45,450 T	36.2 T	ORIGINAL	190	£513,450
Gurkha*	1,999 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	45,210 T	36.3 T	ORIGINAL	190	£512,964
Haida	1,927 S	377 0	37 6	9 0 S	44,000 D	36 D	6 4.7in (3×2) 2 4in (1×2) 4 2pdr (1×4) 12 20mm (6×2)	240	—
Huron	1,990 T	377 0	37 6	11 9 S	44,000 D	30.4 T	6 4.7in (3×2) 2 4in (1×2) 4 2pdr (1×4) 6 20mm (6×1)	240	—
Iroquois	1,927 S	377 0	37 6	9 0 S	44,000 D	36 D	6 4.7in (3×2) 2 4in (1×2) 4 2pdr (1×4) 6 20mm (6×1)	254	—

Name	*Displacement Tons*	*Overall length ft ins*	*Beam ft ins*	*Draught ft ins*	*SHP*	*Speed Knots*	*Armament*	*Complement*	*Cost*
Maori*	2,006 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	46,006 T	35.9 T	ORIGINAL	190	£512,964
Mashona*	1,990 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	45,437 T	35.3 T	ORIGINAL	190	£513,550
Matabele*	1,964 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,299 T	35.9 T	ORIGINAL	190	£515,347
Micmac	1,927 S 2,745 F	377 0	37 6	9 0 S	44,000 D	36.25 D	6 4.7in (3×2) 2 4in (1×2) 4 2pdr (1×4) 12 20mm (6×2)	240	—
Mohawk*	2,017 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,078 T	36.2 T	ORIGINAL	190	£511,927
Nootka	1,927 S 2,745 F	377 0	37 6	9 0 S	44,000 D	31.5 F	6 4.7in (3×2) 2 4in (1×2) 4 40mm (2×2) 8 20mm (4×2)	240	—
Nubian*	2,034 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,426 T	35.8 T	ORIGINAL	190	£511,607
Punjabi*	1,990 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,549 T	35.9 T	ORIGINAL	190	£515,046
Sikh*	2,015 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,448 T	36.2 T	ORIGINAL	190	£510,046
Somali*	2,014 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,207 T	36.4 T	ORIGINAL	226	£512,437

Name	*Displacement Tons*	*Overall length ft ins*	*Beam ft ins*	*Draught ft ins*	*SHP*	*Speed Knots*	*Armament*	*Complement*	*Cost*
Tartar*	2,025 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,077 T	35.9 T	ORIGINAL	219	£512,092
Warramunga	1,927 S 2,745 F	377 6	36 6	9 0 S	44,000 D	34 D	6 4.7in (3×2) 2 4in (1×2) 4 2pdr (1×4) 6 20mm (6×1)	250	—
Zulu*	2,050 T	377 0	36 6	13 0 F	44,176 T	37 T	ORIGINAL	190	£523,477

NOTES

D = Designed
F = Full Load
S = Standard
T = Trials

The original sixteen ships (marked *) had a standard displacement of 1,959 tons and a full load displacement of 2,519 tons.

All twenty-seven ships had a waterline length of 364ft 8ins and a length between perpendiculars of 355ft 6ins.

All had three Admiralty 3-drum boilers at 300lb/sq. in and all were engined with 2-shaft Parsons geared turbines.

The original sixteen ships had a gun armament of 8-4.7in (4×2), 4-2pdr (1×4) and 8-0.5in MG (2×4). All ships carried 4-21in TT (1×4) and most carried one depth-charge chute and two depth-charge throwers. Any variation is recorded in the armament column.

Few authorities agree on the precise figures given for a particular ship at any particular time. The accuracy of those quoted here seems to be the most proven.

Index of Tribals

Afridi 19–28
Arunta 29–39
Ashanti 22–5, 40–65, 94, 123, 141
Athabaskan (I) 59–62, 66–70
Athabaskan (II) 71–85
Bataan 73–7, 86–8
Bedouin 41–51, 89–98
Cayuga 71–84, 87, 99–104, 177
Cossack 20–4, 46, 89–93, 105–15, 179
Eskimo 22, 40–64, 89–95, 116–26, 131
Gurkha 22–5, 127–9
Haida 58–64, 69–71, 83, 99, 103, 122, 130–9, 146, 156, 172
Huron 59–64, 70, 77, 83, 87, 122–3, 131–3, 136–7, 140–8, 155
Iroquois 59–69, 83, 88, 115, 130–3, 137–8, 140–56
Maori 22–7, 44–7, 105–14, 157–62, 179, 220
Mashona 25–6, 41–7, 94, 117, 159, 163–7, 202
Matabele 25–6, 40–8, 163–4, 168–70
Micmac 83–4, 104, 133–7, 142, 171–7
Mohawk 22–6, 44–5, 106, 164, 178–90
Nootka 71, 77, 83–4, 88, 100–1, 133–8, 155, 172, 191–200
Nubian 21–7, 44–5, 105–8, 118–25, 128, 182–90, 201–13
Punjabi 41–51, 89–93, 214–17, 233
Sikh 22–7, 44–5, 106–14, 127, 160–1, 164–5, 179, 218–27
Somali 22–6, 40–57, 94–5, 117, 163–6, 169, 228–34
Tartar 25, 41–5, 50–64, 94–5, 117–25, 131, 141, 159, 164–6, 209–12, 215, 231, 235–42
Warramunga 31–8, 73–7, 86–8, 243–5
Zulu 22, 45–6, 105–14, 161, 179, 201, 220–6, 246–50

Loss of the Scharnhorst

A. J. WATTS

The sinking of the *Scharnhorst* in December 1943, although not realised at the time, was to be the last action of its kind fought by the Royal Navy. This is the story of that action. The book is divided into two distinct parts, the first giving a brief but comprehensive history of the naval war, supplies the necessary background for the understanding of the action. In the second part, twelve tables list the composition of the various forces, the technical specifications of the warships involved, and the detail of the radar and armaments. The text is illustrated with plans of the action and over 50 photographs.

IAN ALLAN

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